

SEVENTEEN
S E R M O N S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS;

B Y

JOHN COLE GALLAWAY, A.M.

VICAR OF HINCKLEY, LEICESTERSHIRE.

L O N D O N :

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The Author.

HINCKLEY,
AUGUST 19, 1785.



P R E F A C E.

NEITHER pride nor ambition impose this work on the public; but paternal duty, and affection for a numerous offspring, at length prevailed with the author to comply with the frequent solicitations of the parishioners, for whom it was originally composed. These sermons do not presume to improve the learned, or amuse the critic; but are solely adapted (as Mr. Sterne observes) for the plain household understanding; which I do not say, is not the most satisfactory and profitable kind of knowledge, though doubtless erudition and criticism are not without their use and pleasure in the world.

THE latter class, I trust, will find the same satisfaction in the perusal, as they expressed in hearing them from the pulpit;

P R E F A C E.

and that the former will be sufficiently gratified, in having done a good and acceptable action: for notwithstanding all the rhapsodical enthusiasm and inveigling deception of some sectaries; good works will ever be pleasing to the mind, and enable us to look up to God and Christ, with surer hope and confidence, both in the hour of death and day of judgement.—No less naturally will evil ones have the contrary painful effect, as elegantly expressed by the Roman satyrist.

——— prima est hæc Ultio, quod se
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur———

Since we are led on to this subject, I hope the reader will excuse my finishing the preface, with a short metaphorical sentence.—Through faith may we build our ship, through hope may we hoist our sails, but it is charity and good works alone which can waft us into the haven of endless and increasing felicity, through Christ our great Redeemer.

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S E R M O N S.

S E R M O N I.

ON THE TRUTH AND COMFORT OF A DEITY.

PSALM xcvi. 1.

THE LORD IS KING, THE EARTH MAY BE GLAD
THEREOF: YEA, THE MULTITUDE OF THE
ISLES MAY BE GLAD THEREOF.

THE Royal Psalmist in these words
asserts two things, First, that there is
a God who is King over all the earth, “ The
Lord is King.” Secondly, that mankind
ought to rejoice because there is such a Being;
“ The earth may be glad thereof: yea, the
“ multitude of the isles may be glad thereof.”

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IN

IN my following discourse I shall endeavour to convince you of the truth of these two grand fundamentals in religion, and then draw from them some useful reflections to ourselves.

Various are the arguments and methods made use of to prove the existence of a God. So abundantly merciful hath our heavenly Father been unto us, that he has stamped his existence on every thing which he hath created : from the very inert particle of matter to the rational soul of man, is the existence of a God clearly to be deduced.

AMONGST the many learned and good men who have wrote on this subject, there is not any who hath given us a clearer or more satisfactory proof of this important article, than the late author of the Religion of Nature Delineated ; and what makes it of more value, it lies within the reach of the meanest capacity. The sum of the argu-

ment is this; " Suppose, says he, that a
" chain consisting of many links to hang
" down from an unknown height; do you
" think it would be a satisfactory answer
" to one asking what sustained it, if he was
" told, that the first link was held up by
" the second, the second by the third, and
" so on to the last; would he not most na-
" turally ask, what sustained the uppermost
" link, upon which in fact, the rest de-
" pended; it must then of necessity be said,
" that the whole chain hangs on something
" equivalent to its weight; and if you sup-
" pose it to be infinite in length and weight,
" you must conclude, that the power also is
" infinite which is able to uphold it."

THUS it is in the chain of natural causes:
To refer it more particularly to ourselves;
it is known that we derive our being from
our parents, and they from their parents;

but to whom was owing the existence of our first parents? They were not generated as being the first people; that they could not make themselves is evidently true; and that they did not exist from all eternity, the very nature and constitution of mankind plainly evince; to what other cause then can we refer it? but to the exceeding goodness of some superior Being, who gave life to all things, and in whom we live, move, and have our being. This not only proves that there is a God, but that he is also an eternal, wise, and good Being.

If God did not exist from all eternity, there certainly must be a time, when he did not exist; but then I ask how he came ever to exist; it could not be, unless he was his own Creator, a thing in itself impossible; it follows therefore, as God does now exist, that he must necessarily have existed from
all

all eternity; and that he will for ever exist is no less true, for what can hinder his existence; he is in the power of no one, but must be an entire independent self-sufficient Being; he will then exist for ever, unless he destroys himself, a supposition of all others the most absurd. That God is wise, the works of nature abundantly testify; with what exactness is every thing created; how well are the different parts of nature adapted to the various functions they are to perform in life? How trifling and incomplete do all artificial things appear when compared with those of nature?

THAT our God is good we must all allow; for what could induce an all-wise, self-sufficient, omnipotent, benevolent, happy Being to create the world, but his goodness; could it be to extend his power, exercise his authority, or display his wisdom?

by no means : * Since God from all eternity hath reigned in the fulness of perfection. We read in the Book of Job, “ Man “ cannot be profitable to God, as he that “ is wise may be profitable unto himself ; ” neither does it augment the happiness of the Almighty that we are righteous, or is it gain to him, that we make our way perfect ; God may have indeed created the world by his power ; by his wisdom aptly disposed every thing therein, and awe by his authority the inhabitants thereof ; these may be considered as instruments in the hands of God ; but it must be his goodness which commanded them to produce this glorious work. It is therefore entirely owing to the

* The reader perhaps may not be displeased with Archbishop Sharp’s remark on this subject.

Infinite knowledge (saith he) foreknew the consequential good of all things ; infinite goodness moved the creation of all things ; infinite wisdom planned them, and infinite power executed them.

benevolence

benevolence and good pleasure of the Almighty, that we are created; and to his abundant mercy, and loving-kindness, that we are preserved.

THAT the Lord our God is one Lord is evident from reason; for if we suppose many Gods, they must be all equal, or else some before others. It is in the highest degree needless and absurd to suppose many equally perfect and independent Beings, when one is not only sufficient for the existence of all, but much more agreeable to the nature of creation and government. But if you suppose them of different degrees of perfection, he alone above all others is to be esteemed the true God, who is the great King among all Gods. Him only are we to serve, for he is highly to be feared above all; there is none among all the Gods, who is to be compared to the Lord; therefore he saith himself in the Book of Exodus, that his

people should have no other Gods before him.

HAVING thus shewn you that there is one living and true God; who is an eternal, wise, and good Being, I shall proceed in the second place to prove, that mankind ought to rejoice, because there is such a Being; "The earth may be glad thereof, yea, the multitude of the isles may be glad thereof." Man, if considered as living under the influence and government of a wise and benevolent God, is without doubt a most noble and excellent production, he is truly the glory of the creation, and in him shineth forth the handy-work of his Almighty Creator; but if he once throws off his dependence on heaven, he is then of all beings the most miserable. Those noble powers he enjoys as distinguishing marks of his superiority above the beasts that perish, serve but to render him more completely wretched,

ed. The beasts of the field enjoy the good things they find on earth in peace and quietness, without considering from whence they came, or for what they are designed; they are sensible of little more than the present moment; they have no understanding to carry them into the region of futurity, or to the contemplation of things natural and divine,

Thus they pass their days without thought, till at length their spirit goeth downward again to the earth, out of which it was taken. But it is not thus with man; who is not only born with a power of reflection, but he must also sometimes reflect. If he sets out in his reasonings on the nature of things that there is no God, they will bring him home nothing but doubts and fears; and the deeper he carries his inquiries into the causes of things, the greater reason he will find, for disquietude and uneasiness.

ness. The astronomer cannot but view those vast and numberless bodies in the celestial regions, with an heavy and despairing heart, if he thinks that the powers and forces by which they act, are not the establishment of some superior and governing master. For however regular they may appear to be, and are indeed, in their courses, yet he very well knows, that the least variation in their laws, would in a few days reduce the whole system into its original nothing.

INDEED they have revolved in an uninterrupted course for many years, but this is no kind of reason why they should continue so to do. For if we suppose the world to be created by that cloak of ignorance, chance; it must necessarily be liable every moment to be again dissolved by chance; surely then no man in his senses can wish to live in so uncertain a state, where

he

he is continually and *and all about him* liable to perish eternally without any manner of reason; he cannot but rather rejoice that the Lord is King, and that all things are under the subjection of a wise and good governor; who can effect nothing, but what is most fitting to be done; whose actions are guided, not like human ones, by caprice and humour, but by reason and goodness.

AGAIN, it is good for us that the Lord is King, in regard to our daily intercourses with mankind. What security could we otherwise have against the injustice and villany of the unthinking and wicked part amongst us? Human laws can do but little, they are too often evaded by craft and bribery, and moreover, there are many crimes they can neither guard against nor punish. But no crime can escape the knowledge and punishment of our own breasts; our conscience will accuse us when we do wickedly,

wickedly, neither will it suffer us to be deaf to its accusations; it makes us acknowledge our evil deeds, and inflicts on us the punishment of a wounded spirit, which is one of the worst evils; according to Solomon, who says in the Book of Proverbs, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" But all this is but a negative, and indeed a mournful satisfaction to a good Christian; for herein lies the great and chiefest advantage, in having an all gracious and good Father in heaven; that whenever we are oppressed with the evils of this life, and injured by wicked men, we know that there is one above, who seeth all our wrongs, who will in due time rid us of our misfortunes, and reward our sincerity and perseverance in him. How often does David confess in the Book of Psalms, that he should have perished in his troubles had he not trusted in God; this bore him up under

under all his afflictions, nay, he even in one place rejoices, that he had been in affliction; “I am glad, says he, that I have been in trouble, that I may learn thy law;” this brought him to reflect what he was; how frail and indigent a creature? How liable to sickness and misfortunes, and consequently, that he stood in need of some superior Being for his aid and protection; then he called upon the Lord, and considered the commandment of his God, and the blessings he fixed on those who diligently kept them. But we shall have the greatest reason to rejoice, that the Lord is King, when we come to take our leave of the world;—then all the pleasures of life will appear, but as vanity and vexation of spirit; our thoughts will at that time be employed in considering, what will become of us hereafter.

THOUGH

THOUGH the infidel may have lived in an utter disbelief and contempt of a God and a judgement to come, yet he must have his fears at the solemn hour of death; he cannot but say within himself "It may be otherwise, and if so, what will become of me a disbelieving and wicked mortal?" How must his soul shrink back at the thoughts of eternal condemnation? With what confusion and horror must he think of appearing before the tribunal of an Almighty, and an offended God?

SURELY, my beloved, it must be more conducive to our peace and happiness, in that most dread and awful change, to persuade ourselves of what is indisputably true, that the Lord is King; and that after this painful life is ended, we shall through the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord, enjoy eternal happiness in the heavens

vens which admits of no decay, but is full of joy and pleasantness for evermore.

COULD it possibly happen that we are deceived, it is a most desirable and advantageous deception ; since no danger can arise from it, and we shall take ourselves out of life, by having a good conscience, with tranquillity and joy. But since it is evident, that after death we must proceed to judgment, we shall finally be rewarded with everlasting glory, at the hands of God.

WHAT profit then hath the infidel and deist, could his principles possibly be true; nothing more than an eternal annihilation. But should they, as most undoubtedly must be the case, prove false, the punishment is everlasting torments. Having thus I hope abundantly convinced you that the Lord is King, and that the earth may be glad thereof,

thereof, I come in the second place, to draw from them an useful reflection or two.

A DISCOURSE on the truth and reality of God's existence, may seem needless, if not impertinent, in so enlightened an age, where, thanks be to God, Christianity is enjoyed in its greatest purity and perfection; this indeed is a most natural, and I wish it could be added, a true conclusion: but alas! how many christians are there, who act, not only as if Christ had not been on earth, but truly, as if there was no God; following their own lustful passions, and treading in the path that leadeth to eternal destruction? But was not this the case, did men consider the importance and necessity of religion and virtue, and the folly and danger of sin and wickedness; were they as anxious after the future welfare of their souls, as every wise and good christian

tian ought to be; yet to contemplate and
 reflect on the works of the creation, is a
 most noble and becoming employment; it
 not only confirms our faith in, but en-
 larges our ideas of God; we gain a clearer
 conception of his attributes, and are inspir-
 ed with a more eager and earnest desire of
 pleasing so great a Majesty; it makes us
 cry out in the rapturous language of the
 psalmist, "The heavens declare thy glory,
 " O Lord, and the firmament sheweth thy
 " handy-work; all thy works praise thee,
 " O God, and most excellent is thy name
 " in all the world; I will sing praises un-
 " to thee, my God, as long as I have
 " any being."

SECONDLY. Since God is the author of
 our existence, and of every blessing in life,
 it is highly necessary that we endeavour,
 to the uttermost in our power, to live a-
 greeable to his most holy commandments;

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by which means alone we may continue his blessing upon us and our posterity : we should not rely too much on our own strength, nor vainly imagine that either wealth, power, or honour, are owing entirely to our own prudence and forecast, but we ought to remember, in the midst of our enjoyments, that the Lord is the giver of them all, and to whom we must finally render an account. These reflections will inspire our hearts with gratitude towards our bountiful Creator ; and make us ready to relieve the wants of others, and as far as in us lieth, promote the happiness and welfare of all mankind.

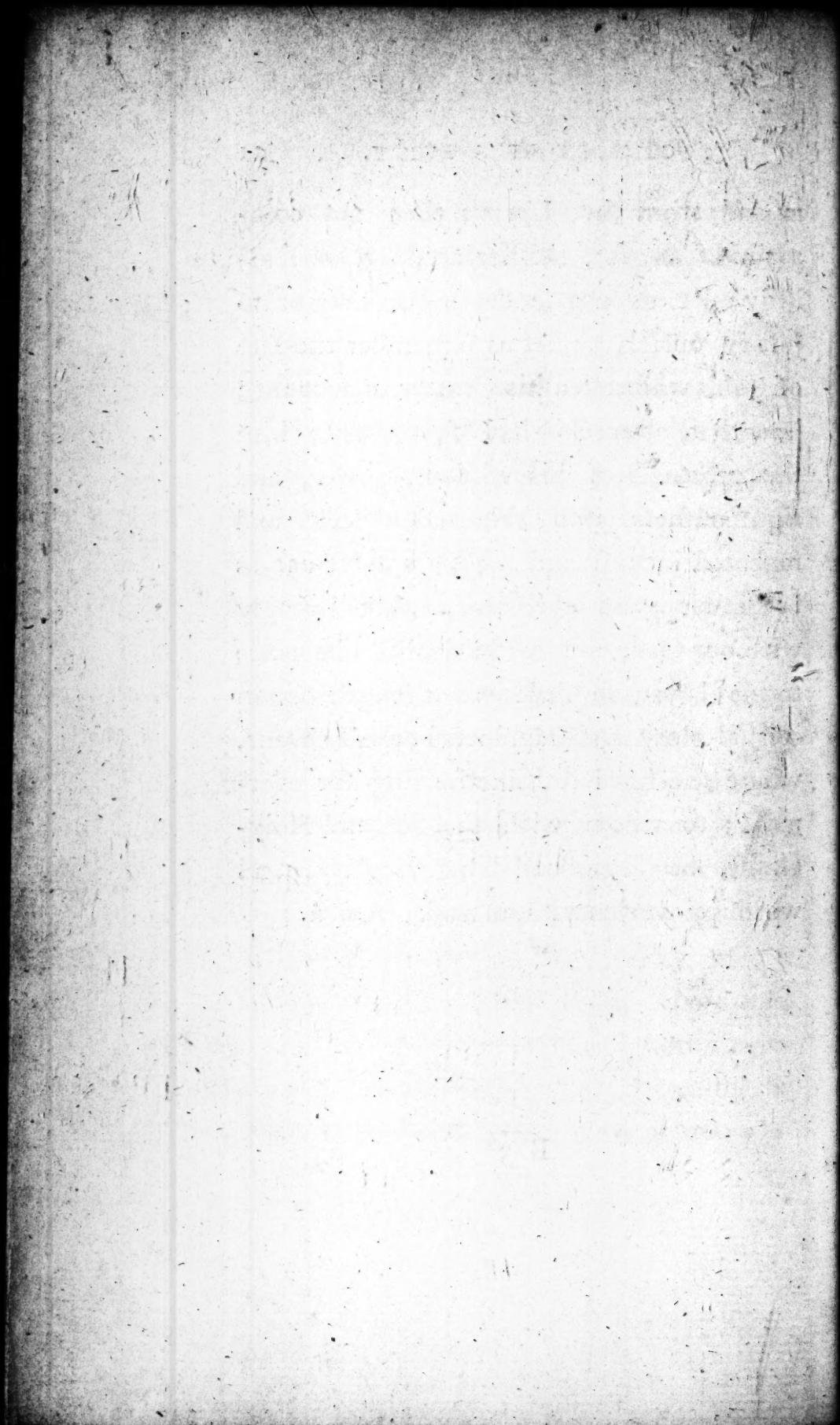
THIS is the proper use, this is the great advantage which men of superior fortunes enjoy ; who may thus let their light shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven : and when the Son of Man shall

come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and shall sit on the throne of his glory, he will say unto them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the world." But if men suffer themselves to be puffed up by wealth and worldly acquirements, and say, who is the Lord; or do not according to their circumstances relieve the distressed of their fellow-creatures, but stop their ears to the cries of the fatherless, widow, and orphan, they must expect to go into everlasting punishment; and when they shall reply to Christ, upbraiding them with inhumanity and hardness of heart, "When saw we thee an hungered, or a thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee." He will answer them, saying, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not

“ unto me ; therefore depart from me, ye
“ cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for
“ the devil and his angels.”

THIRDLY. Since we know that there is a most holy, just, and merciful God, we ought to put our whole trust and confidence in him ; we must never repine at any thing which befalleth us in this life, but conclude that all is designed for our good, as it will undoubtedly prove at the last. Though waves of misfortune are mighty, and rage horribly in this troublesome world ; yet let us remember, that the Lord who dwelleth on high, is mightier, and will at length bring us safe into the haven where we would be. For can you imagine that God takes pleasure in the misery of his faithful servants ? God forbid. No, they are sent as trials of our faith and sincerity in Christ Jesus, that we may hereafter be received into his kingdom with greater glory

ry and triumph. Let us then not complain of our lot, neither accuse God foolishly; let us not condemn our Creator to justify ourselves: let us remember the fate of Job, who called his Creator to account; how that, after God had shewn unto him the greatness of his wisdom, power, and righteousness, Job abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes; but let us, as becometh good christians, walk humbly with our God, and live in dutiful obedience to his laws; so shall we at length obtain eternal glory and happiness in the heavens, where the Lord remaineth King for evermore; to whom, with the Son and Holy-Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, and worship, world without end. Amen.



S E R M O N II.

ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

LUKE 11th, VERSE 2d.

AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, WHEN YE
PRAY, SAY OUR FATHER.

IT was a usual custom amongst the oriental sects of every denomination, to give their disciples and followers a form or directory for prayer, whereby to distinguish them from other sectaries. Thus you see, St. John prescribed a pattern, a form, for his disciples; and one of the Apostles of our blessed Lord, in the verse preceeding my text, said unto him, after he had

once finished praying, " Lord teach us to
" pray as John also taught his disciples.
" And he said unto them, when ye pray
" say, Our Father." After this, follows
that comprehensive and divine prayer which
we emphatically call the Lord's prayer.
The explanation of which, and the natural
reflections arising therefrom, I purpose to
make the subject of our present and some
future discourses.

WE must not imagine, by the disciples
asking our Saviour to have a prayer from
him, that they had never before prayed;
or that this was for the future to be the
only prayer they were to offer up to
God.

THE meaning and intent of giving this
prayer is, as a pattern how they ought to
pray, and in what manner compose all
their petitions to God; and that none of
our

our prayers should contain any thing contradictory to this form which he has given us.

You may remember, this same prayer is given us in Christ's sermon on the mount ; and the occasion of it. You find, in that divine and truly instructing discourse, our blessed Lord examines the doctrine of the old covenant, both in itself, and as corrupted by the vain, superstitious, and wicked Jews ; and takes occasion to correct the one, and compleat the other, as the basis, foundation, and end of this new covenant. And under the article of prayers, he takes notice of the vain repetitions, and ostentatious ceremonies of many hypocritical people amongst them, whose prayers are calculated rather for pride and shew ; and, as too often happened, for knavery and deceit : instead of any earnest of a sincere, contrite, and grateful heart
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towards God their creator. And by our Saviour's telling them that God knoweth what things we have need of, before we ask; they probably wearied and affronted Heaven with repetitions for the honour, glory, and wealth of this world, which we find is displeasing to God, who knows much better than we, what is most expedient for us; who perhaps should frequently pray down ruin and destruction upon ourselves, were such thoughtless and wicked prayers to be complied with. Many heathen writers give us excellent advice on this head. One tells us, thus to offer up our prayers. "Give us, " O King of Heaven, those things which " are convenient for us, whether we pray " for them or not; and avert those that " are evil, though we pray for them. " Let not those things, saith the old poet, " come unto me which I may wish; but " those which are expedient for me." As
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Juvenal observes, "We are dearer to God than we are to ourselves." We frequently through ignorance, pride, avarice, lust, or ambition, under the deception of imaginary good, may wish to ourselves the most solid and lasting evils ; and therefore he concludes with adopting this short ejaculation, as the substance and matter of all our prayers, "That we may enjoy a sound mind in an healthy body." As to the means of accomplishing this ; after the natural use of temperance, sobriety, chastity, and the love of God ; we must leave it to that Being who knoweth whereof we are made, and whose mercy and paternal concern is over every part of his glorious work. These, my beloved, are some specimens of prayer, and address to God, which the pure light of nature dictated to those men, who studied and formed their lives agreeable to it.

THE Old Testament affords us likewise many instances of prayer, and of the manner we ought to offer up our supplications to God. I shall content myself with two; the first of which is Jacob's vow to our Almighty Creator, or form, or foundation of his prayer, or wish to God. "If," saith he, "God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." The other prayer is that noble and truly exemplary one, used by Agar in the latter end of the Book of the Proverbs. "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God

“ God in vain.” These two petitions exactly explain two in the Lord’s prayer, “ Give us this day our daily bread; and “ lead us not into temptation.” Agreeable therefore to this general custom with all good and great men, and teachers (both Heathen as well as Jews,) our blessed Lord has also left to the christian church a form, or pattern; not only to use to God in itself, but to form all our other occasional prayers and petitions to him. Let us therefore, now examine into the divine excellency and perfection of it.

THIS prayer of our blessed Lord’s may be considered as divided into three parts, if you take in the doxology. First, the preface or exordium, “ Our Father which “ art in Heaven :” secondly, the petitions which proceed to the doxology or third part. First then, let us consider the exordium or preface.—“ Our Father

“ which art in Heaven.” Undoubtedly the first requisite in prayer, is the belief in the existence of God ; according to the direction of the Apostle, “ That whoever cometh to God, must be persuaded that he is. Thus then, by saying ‘ our Father,’ we acknowledge both the existence and Providence of God over us. It is well remarked by Plato that “ God may be considered as the *Maker* of all other Beings ; but the *Father* of mankind.”

How expressive is this of the scripture history of ourselves ! As to inanimate things, God sent forth his fiat. “ Let there be light ; let there be a firmament to divide the waters, and it was so.” And in like manner, of living creatures, he said, “ Let the waters bring forth after its kind, and it was so.” He spake only and it was done, he commanded and it was brought forth.

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But of man it is said, God created him after his own power and goodness, and as it were from his own nature; he commands neither the water, air or earth to produce him; but he is his own peculiar maker himself. "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him;" therefore he is properly our Father; for children may with propriety, be called the images of their parents. This, my brethern, is the natural right we have to call God our Father, above every other creature that has been ordered into existence. But we have another reason, whereby we call abba Father; even by adoption and regeneration of baptism through Jesus Christ our Lord. For you find in the New Testament, that Christ frequently calls God *our* Father and *his* Father; and St. Paul to the Ephesians tells us, that God is the Father of us all, and in another place, that

that "We are the offspring of God." Thus you see, by calling him Father, we address him with the boldness and natural confidence of children; which God doth not only allow us to do, through his paternal goodness and affection; but we are commanded so to address our Heavenly Maker and Protector. "When ye pray," saith our blessed Lord, "Ye shall say" "Our Father." By adding to this, "Which, or who art in Heaven," we do not mean to confine God to any peculiar seat or habitation; for as the scripture expresses it, "The heaven of heavens cannot contain the King of all universal nature." We mean by this, to express the highest exaltation, in our power, of his sovereign dignity; that as he is the King of Heaven, and has his seat there above all principality and power, much more must this lower world be subject to his will and pleasure. As the prophet
Isaiah

Isaiah expreffes it, " Heaven may be confidered as the throne of God, and the earth as his foot-ftool." Laftly, we fay, our Father (though in our private devotions) becaufe we are to look upon ourfelves, each individual, as part of the whole race of men, whom God has made as well as us; and are as dear to God, who is no refpecter of perfon, but loveth every one indifcriminately, according to his obedience. And the whole prayer you find is not calculated for any private view or advantage to any individual in particular; but as members one of another; and making up, but one body in Chrift Jefus. Thus, my beloved, I have explained to you the meaning of the preface or exordium to this moft excellent prayer, " Our Father which art in Heaven." Let us now in the fecond place, confider the petitionary part of it; which, like the ten commandments, is divided into two parts;

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the first considered in respect to God, and secondly, in regard to ourselves. Now those petitions in respect to God are three. "Hallowed be thy name;" secondly, "Thy kingdom come;" and thirdly, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." First, then hallowed be thy name. By the word name here, we must not confine it to any particular name of God; but in general, implies every thing that is dedicated to him, or can in any wise belong to his peculiar power or jurisdiction. Thus you see, in the case of swearing, the Jews thought it no offence when they did not immediately swear by his name, but only by the Temple, or by Jerusalem; but our Saviour tells them, it was equally bad as swearing by the name of God; because it was acknowledging, or giving a sanctification or power to that person, or thing, which belongs only to God; or else blaspheming God under different

ferent shapes and allusions. Hence then, we see the thoughtlessness of those Christians who think themselves free from dishonouring God, when in their oaths they do not make immediate use of his name. I would refer such offenders to our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, as declared from the 34th verse of the 5th chapter, by St. Matthew, "Swear not at all, "neither by heaven for it is God's "throne; nor by the earth, for it is "his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for "it is the city of the great King." In short, we are there taught that we are at no time to swear by the Creator, nor yet by the creature, except when solemnly called on civil or ecclesiastical occasions.

AND the same is observable of places dedicated to God's service; a prophanation of them, is a prophanation of the name of

God. Thus you see, Solomon called his Temple an house built to the name of the Lord; and so are all churches and religious places set apart for our devotions to God, to be held as sacred as his name; for they are intended for the celebration of his name, therefore any ill or ridiculous behaviour in God's church, must be considered as a dishonour and affront to his name; consequently when we say, "Hallowed be thy name," we pray that God's name may never be used lightly or wantonly; but with reverential duty, and the highest sensibility of his greatness, power, and holiness, who reigneth over all. And in all places dedicated to his name, we must even sanctify and hallow his Sabbaths by a sober, steady, and religious behaviour in the church. This is what God means when he saith, that he hallowed the Sabbath; that is, he set it apart for sacred and religious purposes

as a day of devotion, prayer and reflection, and in contradistinction to the other fix, which were called common or prophane days. St. Peter gives us the same advice when he enjoins us to "sanctify
"the Lord our God in our hearts;" that is, to retain in our minds a reverential awe and devotion towards God's holy name, and every thing which is dedicated to his divine use and service. This then, is what we wish may be done, when we say, "hallowed be thy name." The next petition is, "Thy kingdom
"come." This, and the following petition, are asked as necessary for the obtaining of the other, "Hallowed be thy name." For before Christ came into the world, not any nation, except the Jews, had any knowledge of God, or knew what the will of the Lord was. Thus you see, St. Paul told the Athenians who dedicated their worship and idolatry to

the unknown God, "him," saith he "do,
"I declare unto you;" and our Saviour himself saith: "No man knoweth the father but the son, and those to whom the son shall reveal him." Now Christ declares that the end of his coming down upon earth, was to shew us the father; to reconcile us to him, and to teach and set before us, by his own bright example, the way of eternal life through his intercession; and the overcoming that death through his obedience, which was entailed on us through the transgression of the first man. When therefore we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we petition with the Psalmist that God's way may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all generations; and as this can be alone done through the light and promulgation of the gospel, we ask by this prayer, that God would take from men all ignorance, hardness of heart, and

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contempt of the revelation of his word by his son; and bring all mankind to the knowledge of himself, and his laws, as declared by his son our Saviour in the gospel; that the sound of this gospel may go out into all lands, and its words to the end of the world; and thereby fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah and the prophet Habbakuk, "And the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, even as the waters cover the sea." Some commentators and divines give a different turn to this petition, "Thy kingdom come;" and think that we thereby ask of God to hasten his kingdom in heaven, and bring us to judgment for our everlasting happiness, through the merits of our blessed Redeemer.

THIS interpretation of "Thy kingdom come," can scarce be admitted; because, in the first place, a breach of charity;

rity; and the begging of God to limit his goodness in creating beings for everlasting bliss; it is shewing ourselves something like the Jews, who envied the happiness of the Gentiles in having the privilege of the gospel equal with themselves.

SOME again imagine it is wishing to God to hasten the accomplishment of this present world; and bring on the millennium of Christ's second coming upon earth, to live with those that are at his coming for a thousand years. But all these interpretations are in no wise compatible with our state or condition, to ask of God to hasten one, or bring on another; for as we know nothing of his dispensation, we can in no wise determine what is best befitting his infinite goodness and wisdom. But the first interpretation is both easy, natural, and charitable. Whoever reads the gospel dispensation, and contemplates
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on the means of present and eternal happiness as there set forth, particularly as declared in our Saviour's sermon on the mount, must in course and with unavoidable confession, agree that there can be no system invented by the wisdom of man, in any wise comparable to it in excellency and goodness. And then, at the same time, either reflect upon the antient kingdoms of heathenism and idolatry, or those present nations of darkness and error amongst the Mahometans, and those people to whom the light of the gospel has never shined; we cannot, I say meditate on these things, without wishing them to be freed from this darkness and iniquity; and to be blessed with the true knowledge of his son, as declared to us by the gospel of Christ our Saviour. Our new covenant is not only the standard of faith, but of true morality; and exclusive of the hopes of a future life, never was there

there, nor ever will there be, precepts equal to them invented for our mutual ease, happiness and peace in this world. Here we are taught how to behave towards God, ourselves, our neighbour, and our enemies; and, as far as is possible to be effected in this world, by what means we may live peaceably with all men. We are taught to be cautious without malice; to guard against our enemies without returning evil for evil: and every ordinance which must be the result of a good and uncorrupted heart. These, my brethren, are the glorious privileges of the gospel or kingdom of Christ and God; and what, if universally known, believed, and practiced, would necessarily produce glory to God, and peace and good-will amongst men. This is then what we pray for, when we say, "Thy kingdom come;" we then wish that this gospel of perfection, the glorious revelation of God's will

will by his son, may be carried through-
out the whole world; that all mankind
may become as one fold, under one shep-
herd Jesus Christ our Lord, the grand
Captain, forerunner and compleater both
of our present and future felicity. But
as Christ tells us, "If we know these
" things, happy shall we be if we do
" them:" that is, our faith alone will
then procure us happiness and felicity,
when our words and actions are agreeable
to the outward professions of our mouths,
or even the inward acknowledgments of
our hearts; therefore we are commanded
to pray in the third and last petition, re-
specting our duty to God, and say "Thy
" will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
The former acknowledgment or petitions
are only preparatory, or leading to this
grand test of the whole.—We acknow-
ledge God as our chief protector, by call-
ing him father: we ascribe to him all
power

power and dominion by confessing him to be the King of heaven: we acknowledge that his name cannot too worthily be praised, by praying that his name may be hallowed; and we confess the excellency and goodness of the revelation by his son, by wishing that the gospel or kingdom of Christ may become universal throughout the world. But what do all these outward professions and prayers avail, unless accompanied with a suitable life and conversation? "What signifies faith God by the prophet Malachi, that you call me father, if you refuse the honour due unto me?" What would it signify if all the world believe in the father, son, and holy ghost, if they lived as too many are apt to do, as if they had neither common sense nor reason; degrading themselves by their corruptions even below the brutes, that have no understanding? The end of God's revelation and will to mankind

kind is, that we may live obedient to that will, even as the angels who live in constant praise and obedience to God. "Thy will be done, O God, on earth as it is in heaven, &c. &c." For thus only shall we, after this life, live in heaven through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, and worship, world without end. Amen.

S E R M O N III.

ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

ST. LUKE II. CHAP. 2. VERSE.

AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, WHEN YE PRAY,
SAY OUR FATHER.

IN a former discourse on these words, I considered the Lord's Prayer so far as respected our manner of addressing God in it, and the praying for the glorifying of his name; the universal promulgation of his will as declared by his Son; and lastly, by a general obedience to his commands by mankind

mankind on earth, as the angels pray to him in heaven. Thus far this *comprehensible* and perfect prayer respects our Creator, his attributes, and our immediate and direct duty towards him; which ends with that part when we pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; let us then now proceed to consider those petitions which respect ourselves and all mankind; and they are these three; first, "give us
 " this day our daily bread; secondly, for-
 " give us our trespasses, as we forgive them
 " that trespass against us; and thirdly, lead
 " us not into temptation, but deliver us
 " from evil." First then, let us consider the force and meaning of the petition "Give
 " us this day our daily bread;" or, as it is rendered in the chapter from which I have taken the text, "Give us day by day our
 " daily bread. This petition, in general, sets forth that our dependance is on God; that it is in vain to rise early, or late take
 rest,

rest, to sow, plant or water, unless God gives the increase. By the word give, we imply, that it is the pure gift of God, who bestows it upon us; not as the reward of our merits or obedience, but through his own abundant goodness and mercy. When we say "Give us this day, or day by day," we shew that we ought to offer up our daily prayers to God, not to eat with anxiety or murmuring for fear of future want, what he hath bestowed upon us for our present and immediate sustenance; that we ought to be thankful that we have what we ask or want for the present; to receive it with grateful and pleasing hearts, and humbly entreat God for no more than is necessary and expedient for our necessities; not doubting but the same benevolent hand which feeds and cloths us to day, will be ready to assist us to-morrow, by our obedience and sincere application and prayer to him. It does not mean that we are to be want-

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ing or deficient in our different callings and stations, for the preservation and support of ourselves, and those who may reasonably look up to us for aid and assistance. But it implies that we should live contented with the ways of providence; and not like the Israelites in the wilderness, murmur whilst the very food is in our mouths, and thereby entailed the wrath of God on them. It certainly cannot but give a man a pleasure to see his particular employment prosper in his hands, and bring him home the honest profit and emolument of his industry and labour, either of mind or body. Yet when what we call adverse fortune happens unto us; that disappointment or losses attend our care, and we reap tares where we have sown wheat, and after all our care to plant, dig about, and prune our vineyard. Yet should it produce wild grapes; we must not lose ourselves in despair, or think unkindly of providence. We must here

take to ourselves the advice of the Apostle, that having food and raiment we must therewith learn to be content. It is indeed, in every man's power, and every man's duty to use his honest endeavours to promote both the welfare and prosperity of his family: and what is in no wise forbid or discouraged in this petition. All that we ask of God in it is, that he will grant us those things which are necessary for us; by asking them we acknowledge both his power and goodness to assist us; and by asking it only for that day, we confess our gratitude and full reliance on him; not doubting his fatherly care and affection, in the same manner during each future day of our lives.

BREAD undoubtedly is particularly mentioned; because where that is, there can be no real want; and where it is not, no abundance can satisfy. It is the staff of life,

and without which, other necessities would at least lose their relish ; and what in itself is sufficient to sustain man's heart, and preserve strength and health to his body. In this petition then, we pray God not only to give to us our daily bread ; to provide what may be sufficient for our present exigences ; but we withal pray to him to give us a grateful and contented heart to receive, or live with thankfulness, in that state of life unto which it shall have pleased God to call us. Not to murmur at God's dealings with others ; not to be envious at those who may have been intrusted with the talents of riches and power ; that they have nothing to do but speak the word only, and their wants are not only supplied, but every imagination or wish fulfilled to their hearts desire : and whilst we have allotted to us only a single talent of bodily labour and industry, which by the sweat of our brow will but just bring to,
and

and afford us day by day, our daily bread. Men in this station of life, should consider God's goodness and providence over them; that while they have bread to eat and raiment to put on, they should be thankful and obedient to God's laws, as the only means of having it continued to them. Murmuring and discontent only creates uneasiness and despondence in the mind, without bringing it any real assistance or relief. But some put a further meaning on this petition, and refer it to the wants of our souls as well as our bodies; and by the word bread, would mean the bread of spiritual life; and therefore we ask of God, as the explanation of the Lord's prayer has it in our Church Catechism, that "God
" will send all things that are needful both
" for our souls and bodies; food and rai-
" ment for our bodies, and faith and grace
" for our souls." But they seem rather to force this construction on it. However,

it is attended with this convenience, that no hurt can, but good may arise from it. If men, in this petition, do mean to ask of God grace for the soul, as well as necessities for the body, no harm can arise from it; for certainly, in this prayer, where we ask of God to supply us with our daily bread, it is naturally supposed that we may make use of our own best endeavours in attention to those means which our station in life affords us, for the maintenance of ourselves and connections; so in like manner, if we here pray for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit and grace to our souls, we must in course use our best endeavours to eradicate out of our hearts and minds every evil imagination and thought; and instill into them good desires, and earnest resolutions of pleasing God. I say in both cases, in respect to body or soul, our own care and attention for their welfare must attend our petition

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to God for them; or else, if we are indolent or idle, faithless and wicked, we are a contradiction to our very prayers; and declare one thing with our mouths, and promote a direct opposite one by our actions: than which, nothing can be more absurd and contradictory, both to reason and the principles and end of the gospel dispensation. This I say, is the construction which some put upon the petition; but the words themselves rather seem to confine it to our bodily wants and exigencies; and the last petition "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, to respect our souls;" but on this, let every one be his own judge and determine. The petition is certainly good, necessary, and expedient in either interpretation. It teaches us to look up to God as our father and benefactor for our sustenance and support; and after the honest use of our best endeavours for the things

of this world, we must leave the event to God; and remember neither to be puffed up with supercilious pride and confidence if riches should increase with us; nor to be lost in wretchedness and despair though we with difficulty procure food and raiment for ourselves. Let us ever remember that it is the same Lord that gave that takes away; and as he is infinite in power, goodness, and happiness in himself, he can neither take delight in the misery of others, nor in having respect of persons; and therefore we may be sure, from the irregularity of things in this world, as well as from revelation, God will at length judge his creatures in righteousness, and every man give account of his talents; when they that have had many intrusted to their care, will have the more to account for; and they who have been faithful in a little, will with equal right, receive a crown of everlasting bliss through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Saviour. This is the meaning of the first petition to God respecting ourselves—gratitude and thankfulness, with a contented mind for those blessings which God, of his infinite wisdom and goodness, may bestow upon us in this lower and probationary state; for riches and poverty, obscurity and power are all equally given us for the trial of our faith and virtue, in order to render us meet partakers of Christ's kingdom in heaven. The next petition is in respect to our sins and offences, which we through our own frailty and the fall of our first parents daily fall into, both towards God and ourselves and fellow-creatures. We then, are here taught and emboldened to ask of God the forgiveness of our sins through the merits of Christ; and are taught on what condition we can ask pardon of our offences at the hands of God through his mediation; "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

AND

And certainly the terms are just and natural; for if we will not forgive our brother his trespasses, but persecute him with malice and revenge, who are encompassed with the same infirmities; how can we ask forgiveness of that God, whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity, and too good to give us any provocation to sin and transgress against him? Here then we are taught that most useful but most difficult lesson, of loving not only our friends, but our enemies. The word which we translate forgive, falls greatly short of the original term; you see in St. Luke it is said, that we ask of God to forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Every sin against God, may be considered as a debt due to the justice and goodness of God; and by forgiving a debt, the original word means to blot out and erase, and discharge as we do the accounts of those who have fully satisfied our demands upon them; which

which our Saviour more fully explains in the verses immediately following the Lord's Prayer—That God will not forgive us our trespasses, unless we forgive the trespasses of our brother, from the very bottom of our hearts. Indeed our Almighty Creator frequently explains to us in the old Testament, what he means by forgiveness; that he will no more remember them, nor call us into judgment for them; that if we will but repent they shall not be mentioned unto us; but for the righteousness which we have done, shall we enter into life. Hence then, we see in what manner we are to forgive our enemies; that we are to entertain in our hearts no malice nor revenge to them, but must leave the revenge of our cause, either to the public laws of our country, or the righteous tribunal of God at the last great judgment; where the secrets of all hearts will be disclosed, and every one will be judged according
to



to righteous judgment. We are not here in any wise commanded to harbour evil or designing men in our bosom, or to make the wicked or malicious the companion of our lives. Our Saviour teaches us on this occasion, that upon his being refused going into a village of the Samaritans, his disciples, James and John were immediately inflamed with indignation, and wanted our Saviour to be directly revenged upon them, " Lord, say they, wilt thou, that
" we command fire to come down from
" heaven and consume them even as Elias
" did : " but he turned about and rebuked them, and said, " Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of
" Man is not come to destroy men's lives,
" but to save them, and they went to another village. " You see our Saviour shewed himself an enemy to revenge, but at the same time he refused to have any communication with them : and in like manner,

ner, when he sent his disciples into the world, he advised them against all wranglings, quarrels and revenge against, or with, any wicked men they might meet with; but withal advised them to shake off the very dust from their shoes, in leaving the habitations of evil men, thereby forbidding all intercourse with them. From hence we are again taught how to behave to those that offend us: we are to harbour no malice in our hearts, nor study with revengeful spite to return evil for evil; but then we are commanded to guard ourselves against their stratagems and wiles, and he who injures us once, we have a right to endeavour that he may not do so the second time; we are here again to make use not of the sting or malice, but of the wisdom of the serpent; not the timidity or supineness, but the innocence of the dove. We are then you see to make it a fixed rule to do injuries to no one, though he injures

Injures us : but at the same time we have a right to take heed to ourselves that we suffer no injury of others. It is the only forgiveness we are capable of towards offenders against us; not to injure them by wicked retaliation; this shews we forgive them from the heart, in the same manner as the abstinence from future evil is the best sign of our repentance for that which is past. We must consider them in common as our fellow creatures, even as God suffers the sun to shine upon the evil, as well as the good; leaving the judgment of all things with him to whom all hearts are open, and the cause, and design, and end of every action, is as well seen to him, as to the perpetrators themselves. This is not only the best means of living peaceably with men, but gaining the eternal peace of God; this is not only the most probable method of having allowance made for our infirmities amongst men, but you
find,

find, the ground-work and condition of our forgiveness with God; as our Saviour himself has taught us to pray for and expect the forgiveness of our sins, or trespasses, on condition that we forgive the sins, trespasses or debts of others against us. The last petition in this most concise and comprehensive prayer, is, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

We must not here mean that God tempts any man to sin; for as Solomon observes, God neither tempts any one, neither hath he given to any man licence to sin. What we ask of God is, to keep us in such a way as may not put us to the trial of our virtue, or expose us to the temptation of sin. This is what Agar means, when he prays to God, to remove from him vanity and lies, with which he might be deceived and seduced from his uprightness and integrity; not to depress him with poverty or indigence, lest he should not have resolution enough to persevere with-

without murmuring, discontent or injustice; neither to give him an over abundant affluence of riches, lest they should puff up his heart with haughtiness, so as to forget the author of them and be apt to deny his dependance on heaven. All these things we are commanded to pray against, as admirably set forth in our church litany. You see even our Saviour himself prayed to God, if it were possible to let the cup of death pass, to comply with it: and so we have a right to ask of God to preserve us from all sin and wickedness, that is, from every thing which may tempt us to it; from any thing outwardly which may invite our carnal senses; or inwardly from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul. But here, as in all other petitions, our own best endeavours and strivings against vice, is presupposed; and indeed the only reason upon which we can expect God's protection, either when vice

assaults

ing into their snares. If we make virtue our study, and vice our abhorrence, we can then with boldness, and filial assurance, ask of our heavenly Father to preserve us from all temptations to evil; to consider our frailty, and accept our best endeavours to please him, and not to try us above what we are able to bear; and with expectation of his fatherly assistance, ask him in the latter part of this petition, to “deliver us from evil;” which some interpret from the evil one, that is, from satan; and indeed some similar passages where the same word is used, seem to fix this meaning to the petition, that what we here ask of God, is his blessed will not to endanger our virtue by temptation, but deliver, or free us from the power of our grand adversary Satan. For thus you find our Saviour said to St. Peter, that he was delivered up into the power of Satan, to be

E sifted

sifted by him. It is then against this grand adversary we pray, agreeable to our church litany, that we may beat down Satan under our feet. But when we thus pray against the influence of this wicked one, Satan, and ask of God to deliver us from his power and dominion; we naturally declare ourselves his enemy, and profess to fight against him, under the banner of Christ, to the uttermost of our power. The Scriptures tell us, that "if we resist the devil and his solicitation, he will flee from us," as he did from Christ after the temptation in the wilderness; and you see, in the parable of the sower, that the devil is allowed to supplant the word of God with his own wicked devices, when we suffer it to pass into our ear unnoticed, and give it no place in our hearts and affections. By this prayer then, we ask God to be our guard and defence in our christian warfare; and seeing we are surround-

ed

ed with innumerable temptations and allurements to sin, we earnestly intreat God so to subdue and mortify our evil and corrupt affections; that the evil inticements of this world may not tempt us to desert our duty; nor to suffer us, of his mercy and goodness, to be tempted above our strength; but to deliver us from Satan our great tempter, who is ever ready at hand to encourage and ripen into actions either the outward sollicitations of the world, or the inward imaginations; and evil thoughts of the soul: we then, here offer ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be an holy and reasonable service to God; we beg his heavenly assistance to our own best endeavours, to keep them pure and unspotted from the world; that we may be preserved, if it be his blessed will, from every temptation of offence towards him; more especially from the power and dominion of Satan our declared enemy, who we know from Scrip-

ture, is daily seeking whom he may devour, and make equally miserable with himself; so that thus, through our own study after virtue, and resistance to vice, we may, through God's holy assistance and protection, live secure from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemies, and from everlasting death; and at the day of judgment be received into the realms of eternal and increasing happiness in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with the Father, and the Holy-Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, and worship, world without end. Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N I V .

ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

ST. LUKE, CHAP. 11. VERSE 2.

AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, WHEN YE PRAY,
YE SHALL SAY, OUR FATHER.

IN a former discourse on these words,
the Lord's Prayer was to be considered
as divided into three parts; the preface, or
exordium; the petitionary part; and lastly,
the doxology or conclusion. We have al-
ready explained the force and meaning of
the two prior divisions: let us therefore,

now, in the last place, consider the doxology or conclusion ; and then draw from the whole some useful reflections to ourselves. First, then, we are to consider the doxology or conclusion, “ Thine is the
“ kingdom, and the power and the glo-
“ ry, for ever and ever Amen.”

You must have observed, that this doxology, and petitionary affirmative Amen, is not given us by St. Luke ; from whence some would infer, that neither was it written by St. Matthew, but inserted by his commentators and critics ; particularly as it is not taken notice of by St. Chrysostom, Cyprian, and other early writers of the Church on the Lord's Prayer ; and indeed, omitted in some copies of the Greek Testament. Others are of opinion, and I think with a very great shew of probability, that they were written exactly in the manner they now stand in the New Testament.

tament. Divines of this way of thinking, account for the difference in the following manner.

THE Lord's Prayer, as given by St. Luke, is to be considered as a private prayer, and calculated for the chamber or closet: that given by St. Matthew is delivered to the world in general. You see in St. Luke, the disciples asked our Lord to "teach them to pray, in the same manner" as John taught his disciples; and he said "unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father." This was a private directory for his disciples; and a prayer that each of them should make use of to God in their addresses to him; and therefore you find the Amen is not; added because, as the words were to come out of their own mouth, there was no occasion to add the Amen, of assent or wish. But the prayer in St. Matthew is given on a different occasion,

and for a different purpose. You see that this is given to mankind as a public prayer; and a pattern for all our prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings to God in the public churches: and in some of the early churches, the minister or reader, used to stop at "deliver us from evil;" and then the congregation used to add, "Thine
" is the kingdom, and the power, and the
" glory, for ever and ever, Amen:" That is, this we believe, wish, and confide on. And in the same manner we use the *Gloria Patri*, at the end of the Psalms; and what seems as a confirmation that this doxology was given by our Saviour himself is, that the whole prayer seems to be a collection from, and improvement of, several prayers used by the Jewish people: and this conclusion looks like a near copy, or resemblance of that form of praise and adoration used by David, in the first Book of the Chronicles, on the earnestness and zeal of the people

ple in assisting Solomon to build a temple to the Lord: "For thine, O Lord, is the
"greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for
"all that is in heaven, and in the earth is
"thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord,
"and thou art exalted as head above all."

This you see, is an acknowledgement of God's infinite power, might, majesty, and dominion: that he is superior to all beings both in heaven and earth; that he reigneth with uncontroul over angels, men, and every other creature that ever has, can, or will exist, and draw the breath of life. It is of God, and none besides him, that cometh riches and honour; and, what is superior to these, health, and strength, and peace of mind. In God's hand alone is power and might; and to him it is to make and to give strength to all: therefore, saith holy David, "Unto thee do we give
"thanks, and it is thy glorious name, O
"Lord,

“ Lord, that we magnify and praise, and
“ give the honour due unto thy name.”

THIS doxology here is something of the same nature ; it is a confirmation of the former part of prayer, as relating to God's attributes ; and it shews the foundation, reliance, and hope we have, to expect a compliance with the petitions which relate to ourselves, and our fellow creatures. Thus when we say, “ Thine is the kingdom,” it is a confirmation to our wish in the prayer, “ Thy kingdom come ;” when we acknowledge “ Thine is the power,” we grant that “ God's will ought to be done on earth, “ as it is in heaven ;” and lastly, when we say, “ Thine is the glory, for ever and ever,” we acknowledge the propriety of our petition, “ hallowed be thy name ;” and by the Amen, we acknowledge our belief and assent to the attributes of God, as our eternal Father, Creator, and Governor of us,
and

and all mankind; in the same sense as we use it at the end of the belief, or creed, and as it stands explained in our baptismal profession, "all this I stedfastly believe." And in regard to the petitionary parts, we, by the Amen, not only give our assent to the propriety and justness of the petitions to God our eternal Father; but we also earnestly wish they may be granted and complied with, as far as is expedient for us. In this sense, we say, Amen, at the end of every petitionary or thanksgiving prayer used by the minister; thereby making ourselves partakers of the whole prayer, which we are not supposed to say aloud, but mentally, or with our hearts, after the minister; and then by our Amen, to acknowledge our attention whilst he prayed, and shew our unanimity and assent, by saying, Amen; that is, as our Church Catechism properly explains it, "so be it."

"I heartily join in the prayer now repeated,

“ and most cordially wish God, of his infinite mercy and goodness, may bring it to pass through the merits of our blessed Lord and Saviour.”

THESE are the two opinions concerning the doxology, or conclusion, which the wisdom of our church hath ordained; though the liturgy sometimes omits it, and sometimes retains it in our public devotions, just as the case may be, as what can never be determined to the opinion of all sects. We are sure of this one thing, that it can at no time do us hurt to acknowledge, at the end, or in any part of the prayer, that majesty, power, and glory, belong unto God for ever and ever. And surely, we can never acknowledge or contemplate on any subject that can bring us home more real consolation and comfort. When we consider the universality of God's kingdom, that he is King of Kings, Lord of Lords,

Lords, and the only Ruler of Princes, who does from his throne behold all the dwellers upon earth : what can be a greater incitement for us to look well to our ways, to approve ourselves in his sight, who not only can view the simple actions, but beholdeth the windings of the heart. He sees the spring of our actions, from whence they arise, and how connected with our souls ; whether the offspring of pride, of envy, of malice, or of revenge ; or whether they are the result of a good conscience, and heart sincerely devoted towards God. The kings of the earth may be deceived, and the judges of this world may, through ignorance or other consequences of our degeneracy, neither find out, nor punish the iniquities of our ways ; but God knoweth all things, and will bring us unto judgment, not only for the actions of our lives, but for the very words of our mouth ; yea, the very meditations of our hearts escape not the

the knowledge of the Almighty, nor the judgment of that great day, when the graves shall give up their dead, and every soul in its incorruptible, and immortal body, shall at the sound of the trumpet appear before the tribunal of God. Every one must then prove his own work; and they that have done good will receive the reward of eternal life, and they that have done evil, will go into everlasting punishment. All this we acknowledge, by saying, "Thine is the kingdom;" and surely the effects of it ought to be, that we zealously, like good subjects, attend to the commands of this celestial King; that we may at length become meet partakers of the kingdom of heaven. The next acknowledgement is, "Thine is the power." A king without power, would soon become an object of ridicule instead of reverence and respect; here then we confess, that as we allowed his kingdom to be over all,
here

here we do admit, that as his kingdom is infinite, so also is his power; that he can do all things both in heaven and earth, and in every part of his dominion; and consequently, he is the fountain of goodness and grace; and one that is able to grant all that we can wish or desire, and even as the Scriptures phrase it, “to do abundantly for us, above all that we can wish or ask;” in that all nature is subject to him, and there is nothing which God cannot easily effect and bring it to pass, without any kind of labour or trouble. Can men, then, if they ever reflect on this infinite, and unlimited power of God, hesitate one moment whom they are to serve; whether God, or their own unruly passions? whether it is not their interest, as well as their duty, to subject all passions, interests, and views in this life, to that God who has power not only to save or destroy the body, but to reward or punish the soul to all eternity?

“I say

“ I say unto you, faith Christ, fear him.” Is not this my brethren, sufficient to deter us from all evil works, which God not only faith he will, but hath power to punish with misery inconceivable; and to engage our hearts and minds in all godly thoughts, which may manifest themselves in good works; since we know God not only will, but has also power to reward us with eternal happiness, through Jesus Christ our Saviour? And lastly, we say, “ Thine is the glory;” by this we acknowledge that he is infinite in glory and perfection; in whose presence, as the Psalmist observes, is “ fullness of joy; and “ and at whose right hand there are pleasures “ for evermore.” There, you see, is the summit of perfection; his kingdom is universal; his power infinite; and his glory inexhaustible. How strenuous then ought we to be, to gain the favour of this God, who can crown us with such transcendent glory,

glory, as the reward of our obedience, glory, and perfection? St. Paul tells us, neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which are reserved in heaven for those, who with a good conscience and an upright heart, following after righteousness, have finished their course of trial and probation on earth. St. Paul could not have given us a more lively and engaging prospect of heavenly glory, than by telling us it is what hath never entered into the heart of man; for surely, there is no state or condition in this life, that a man would wish to enjoy throughout all generations; but as we here acknowledge God to be infinite in glory, we rest with full confidence, that if we will but fear and obey him, he will at the last give us our hearts desire, and fulfil all our petitions, to the satisfying of the soul. Here are inducements to righteousness,

ness, to holiness, to true christian obedience. Here is the easy yoke of God's paternal care and goodness over us. If we will but do what our own unbiaſſed conscience will enjoin and commend, you ſee we ſhall after this life, become heavenly inhabitants with a God univerſal, and infinite in dominion, power, and glory; and not only that, it will continue ſo for ever and ever; and what reaſon can be given why we ſhould not for ever be continued the participators of his perfections and goodness? There is no doubt that if we are obedient here, we ſhall not only find fullneſs of joy and pleaſure at God's right hand, but that they will continue for evermore. Can we think on theſe things, and ſuffer any luſtful paſſion, or worldly vices to withdraw us from our duty? Can we think on theſe things, and be daunted or frightened from our duty for fear of any worldly danger? and give up our title to this ineffimable

and eternal seat of perfect and ever-during felicity, for any thing in this life? no not even if we could gain the whole world. How much more then, ought we to carefully guard against those sins which are the mere effects of the want of thought, and every other offence against God which besets us; that we may with patience and duty run the race which is set before us; neither turning to the right hand through lust or pride, nor to the left through covetousness and worldly power; but to pass, with steadiness and perseverance, through that blessed road pointed out to us in the gospel; which, through the merits of its Author, Jesus Christ, will bring us to those realms of joy unspeakable; which will fully repay us for our perseverance or hardships in this world, and will continue pure, and unmixed with sorrow and anxiety, throughout all generations?

WE then conclude the whole prayer by saying amen ; and surely no man can but ardently give his assent to the one part, and his wish for the accomplishment of the other. But, as I before observed, we must not only assent to, or wish this with our outward mouths ; but, my brethren, it must come from our hearts, and be accompanied with all the mental faculties of our souls ; and above all, if we mean to gain by it the joys of heaven, it must be confirmed by an holy life and conversation. This is the end of all our prayers, thanksgivings, and intercessions for ourselves and others, that we, by obedience and godly duty, shew ourselves the children of our heavenly Father ; and then he will have compassion upon our infirmities, and pity us even as an earthly father pitieth his children ; and will, at length, forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, through the intercession of Christ. Let but sin be the

object of our aversion, and let us but, as we promised at our baptism, manfully fight under the banner of Christ against sin, the world, the flesh and devil, and continue Christ's faithful soldiers to our lives end, in ordering our goings according to his gospel: and then will our blessed Lord lead us safely through the temptations of this life, and guide our feet in the way that leadeth to everlasting glory in heaven. Thus I have gone through a brief explanation of the Lord's Prayer; from which I shall draw one short inference or two, by way of application to ourselves,

AND here it is objected by some, The too frequent use and repetition of this most excellent prayer in our liturgy. In order to set this matter right, we must remember that the office of the Christian liturgy in our established church is divided into three

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distinct

distinct parts; which were formerly read in different places of the church.

THE ordinary or daily morning or evening service was, as now, read in the desk; the litany, in the body of the church; and the communion service, at the altar*. As these were then distinct services, you must certainly allow the necessity and wisdom of using the Lord's Prayer once in every sacred and devout office of the church; and it is used but once by us in any office, except that of the daily service; where you find it is given once with the doxology, and once without it; and the occasion where they are used, is so natural and urging, that I do not see how we could so well address our God as with the Lord's Prayer, had we even used it before in the service.

* As is now observed in some Cathedrals, amongst which is York.

THE first time, you know, is after we have made a general confession of our sins; and if our repentance for them, and resolution for future obedience, are sincere and from the heart, and our belief in the gospel unfeigned; we are then, as the minister informs himself and us, absolved from all our past sins, and heirs of eternal joy through Jesus Christ our Lord,

WHAT prayer now could the wisdom of man invent so proper to follow this merciful redemption from sin, and the hopes of eternal life, as the prayer which our Lord and Saviour has taught us?

THE other time of using it, is after we have heard from the Old and New Testament, the nature of the old covenant with the Jews, and the new one with us; in what manner they are reciprocal proofs of their divine origin; we then give our own

assent to them, and declare our faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by repeating the belief; and thus, you see, if we are sincere, are we become true Christians. In the first part, we give up our sins, and promise to cloath ourselves with righteousness; which promise, if we keep on our parts, God will on his part forgive our sins, and reward us with eternal life, through the merits of his Son; therefore we then naturally call upon him, and say our Father. Here you see, we manifest our faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and then proceed to make our prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving to God through the Son and Holy Ghost; and what prayer, my brethren, would any Christian tell you it was so proper to begin our supplications to God our eternal Father with; could he hesitate a moment to declare it ought to be the Lord's Prayer, the prayer of that Saviour by whose intercession alone we are
impowered

impoverished every Abba Father? Thus I have endeavoured to explain to you the necessity of using the Lord's Prayer twice in our daily service; and take it for granted that you all must think it necessary to use it once in every distinct part; which is the case with all offices in the church. I shall therefore only make one short observation more, and that is, from this Lord's Prayer we learn that Christ enjoins a set form of prayer; as he himself has further taught when he made use of the same words successively in three distinct times of prayer; and indeed I am at a loss how men can pray themselves, and much more how people can join with them in unpremeditated prayers. Men must unavoidably have their minds taken up with thinking on the connections of the sentences, and not with devotion; and the newness of the thoughts, and novelty of the words, which will always attend unpremeditated prayers, must
interrupt

interrupt and draw off the attention of those who come to join with them in prayer; whereas when we know that the prayer is composed with wisdom and piety, every way adapted to express our wants, thanksgivings, and sentiment of our thoughts and heart, and in all respects formed to excite real devotion, and zeal unfeigned in our prayers; here, you see, we have nothing to impede our devotion; nothing is required but an honest and zealous heart to attend the minister, either with our voice or our minds, as the church liturgy directs; and thereby pray both with the spirit and the understanding also. It would be too long a task to enter now into the propriety and beauty of our church liturgy; how well, I had almost said how divinely penned it is, to render our devotion, a sincere, a spiritual, and an holy and acceptable sacrifice to God through Christ. The whole that I shall observe is, that if our lives and conversations

were

were but as near to the perfection of the gospel-precepts, as the service of our church, it would be happy for us. Had we no more marks of human frailty in our lives than that has in its composition, there is no doubt but at the last we shall be made heirs of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory and worship, world without end. Amen.

S E R M O N

OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

yourself as near to the throne of the
Father, as the service of our church
in which he has to us. Had we no more
marks of human frailty in our eyes than
that has in its composition there is no
doubt but at the last we shall be made heirs
of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our
Lord; to whom, with the Father and Holy
Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory and
worship, world without end. Amen.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N VI.

ON THE NECESSITY OF REFLECTION AND
SEARCHING INTO OUR OWN WAYS.

Pfalm cxix. 59, 60.

I CALLED MY OWN WAYS TO REMEMB-
RANCE : AND TURNED MY FEET TO
THY TESEIMONIES. I MADE HASTE
AND PROLONGED NOT THE TIME TO
KEEP THY COMMANDMENTS.

THE sacred writer, in this psalm sets
forth the necessity, the amiableness and
advantage of loving God, and keeping his
commandments on the one part, and on
the other, the unreasonableness, the defor-
mity, and danger, in living in open viola-
tion

tion to them; these two points, with the causes of, and effects attending them, make up the whole psalm.

IN the verses I have chosen for my text, David sets forth the means he made use of to preserve himself in the law of God; this, you see, is by calling his own ways to remembrance; for that not only made him eschew those parts of them which were evil, but urged him on to do good. "I called," said he, "my own ways to remembrance and turned my feet to thy testimonies."

THIS expression is still more warm and urging in the next verse, as if he had seen the great folly and danger of sin, and hurried away from it, as we would flee from any noisome or deadly thing; and with eagerness returned to God, whose service alone is perfect freedom.

"I made

“ I made haste,” saith he, “ and delayed not to keep thy commandments.”*

* It is observed of this psalm that it rings changes as it were upon the law of God, in the ten following words: 1. Law. 2. Testimonies. 3. Ways. 4. Precepts. 5. Statutes. 6. Commandments. 7. Judgments. 8. Word. 9. Ordinances. 10. Justice. each of which I should think here implies the whole law; though in the Pentateuch they are severally applied to somewhat different significations.

It is thought statutes or commandments *Εντολαι, προσταγματα* refer to God's will respecting the manner and propriety in their worship of and obedience to him. Judgments *κριματα κρισεις δικαιωματα* respect their courts of judicature. See Croxal's scripture policy and Lewis's hebrew antiquities.

We may notice that David does not only here, like Homer, divide this psalm into twenty-two portions agreeable to the number of Hebrew letters: but also that each verse in every portion,—begins with the letter belonging to that division—thus every verse in the first eight begin with α.

THIS

THIS part therefore of the psalm, naturally leads us to consider the great advantage of calling our ways to remembrance; and from hence we shall be able to draw some useful reflections to ourselves. First then, let us consider the great advantage of calling our ways to remembrance.

UNLESS a man will sometimes retire into himself, and his own heart, it is impossible for him to turn from the error of wickedness, or receive any satisfaction from his virtue or religion. But, even as men of natural degeneracy, and proneness to error and sin, it highly concerns us to look into our ways, even for the very best; to extirpate the noisome weed of vice from amongst the good fruits of virtue, lest by degrees it should grow predominant, and overcome them before the harvest.

SIN is of an engaging nature, in its address and outward promises; it will suit itself to all complexions and humours; nay, sometimes steals into our hearts and affections, under the appearance of even virtue herself. Virtue generally tries her votaries, before she admits them into her friendship; and discovers to them the advantage and pleasantness of her ways; vice, on the other hand, conceals the sting and wages of sin; accosts and invites us with present pleasure, which is apt to captivate our sensual appetites, and so far engage our passions as to give no time to our reason or religion to interpose, and inquire whether those things may not hereafter be our sorrow and punishment; and therefore, as the Apostle reasons, what profit can there be in such pursuits, whereof we shall hereafter be ashamed? Whose satisfaction, at best, is but moment-

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ary and sensual; but whose punishment is spiritual and eternal?

NOTWITHSTANDING the difference is so very manifest and glaring; yet, to our great sorrow and confusion, do we find it is overlooked, for the most part, in our pursuits in life. If the companions of our lives, say, "Come, let us go together into the house of folly and sin; let us revel in the scenes of wickedness and iniquity;" do you think the greater part of the world would answer, with David.—"Away from me ye wicked I will keep the commandments of my God? or how can I do these evil things, and sin against God?" Or do ye think they would follow the multitude to do evil?

THUS far we may determine the case, that if a man does not imitate the psalmist's advice, of bringing his ways to re-

membrance, and sometimes communing with God and his own heart, in his chamber or retirement; the chances are greatly against him that he falls and gives way to the temptation.

WE are naturally inclined to evil; and our passions are meant to be guided by reason and religion. This then, is our contest, this is the nature of the state of our probation. If then, we will not make use of this reason or religion, we shall necessarily fall a victim to our passions; and we shall lay ourselves open to every temptation to folly and vice, that evil company may throw in our way.—But it is not only serviceable to guard us against evil; but also to strengthen and confirm us in that which is good. For if reflecting upon our evil ways, will set them before us in their proper deformity; and is the best method for the turning our feet

from the paths of vice to those of virtue; how much more comfortable, and how much more closely must it rivet our hearts in the love of God, to reflect on our virtue and obedience? How much more pleasing must this be, than the gloomy reflection of wickedness and sin? What can afford greater pleasure to a man, than to reflect and commune with God and his own heart; to find that all is right within, and stedfastly fixed in the way of his Creator's commandments? I don't mean my brethren, that there is any room to boast before God, when I distinguish between good and evil men; for the very best and most careful of us, will find, upon calling our ways to remembrance, that we have omitted and left undone many of those duties we owe both towards God and our neighbour: and been guilty of, and done many things against both, which we ought not to do.—The difference between good

and evil men lies in this——between those who endeavour to please God and offend not of malicious wickedness; and those who seem to live for no other end than to sin against God, and violate his commandments, as their brutal and dissolute passions may instigate their evil hearts. Such wicked men as these, you see, can have no hopes of reformation and amendment; unless they will stand still and take a calm and penitent review of their vile and profane actions. The first step to virtue is to flee vice; and the first step to flee vice, is to coolly examine and look into it. Vice can never stand the testimony and trial of reflection, nor even the cursorily interrogation: to what purpose do we pursue her? For instance, let the wicked man only ask himself these short questions—Why do I blaspheme God? Why do I slander my neighbour? Why do I debauch and enervate my mind and body by

intemperance and sensual lusts ? What answer do you think that vice can give to these interrogatories ? She cannot defend her cause ; and much less when they bring against her the law of God, and they find that vice is not only fruitless and unreasonable, but that those who are guilty of these things shall not see God ; but be tormented for ever with Satan and his angels ? Moreover we shall, upon this reasoning learn on the other side, that virtue and godliness of living hath the promise of eternal life. This then, is, you see, a most urgent argument to make trial of virtue ; and if a man can once be brought to this, he will soon see the great difference between virtue and vice ; he will soon applaud his choice, and bless the hour he deserted vice for virtue ; he will soon experience the silent and pleasing reflections of having pleased God, instead of the continual hurry and perturbation of
sin

fin and folly, together with the torment of an evil conscience, and the dreadful foreboding of future and eternal punishment. This is clearly the advantage and necessity of, what I call, the sinner's bringing his own ways to remembrance; as the most probable, and indeed the only chance for his turning again his feet to God's testimonies. Let us now see the necessity of the good man's calling his ways to remembrance. You know I before observed, that by the good man, I do not mean the perfect man; but only to oppose him to one whose whole study and life is sin and infamy; whereas this man endeavours to please God; he is constant and devout at his church; and strives in his life and conversation, to adorn and confirm his faith and profession in Christ Jesus, and his holy gospel. But still, we are all liable to error; and the most careful must take heed lest he fall; and there-

fore the most religious will find great advantage from reflecting on their ways; to check any evil thoughts which may have arisen; to see that their heart is whole within them; that they are not slack in their duty towards God; and to strengthen and confirm their pious resolutions, and to eradicate every the least inclination to wavering, either in faith or practice. These are points which the most virtuous will find necessary and useful. The wicked man then, must reflect, in order for reformation and amendment; and the good man, in order for further perfection in all virtue of mind and godliness of living. Having thus shewn the great necessity and advantage of calling our ways to remembrance, I come in the last place, to make a suitable application of it to ourselves.

AND

AND surely, if ever we call our ways to remembrance, and intend to make our peace with God by leaving off sin, and from henceforth walking in his holy commandments, it should be when we draw nigh the altar.

MANY are the books written on this subject, and I doubt not with pious and good intentions; but after all that can be said or written, every man's own heart is his best instructor. We must ask ourselves this question, both when we attend the church or altar, whether we mean to act up in our lives to what we there profess with our mouths? This is the end both of baptism and the supper of the Lord, that we who thus profess ourselves christians should depart from iniquity. If we were to employ every hour from the notice of a sacrament, to the participation of it, in fasting, prayer and humi-

miliation ; if our hearts were not contrite and renewed in us ; if our sincere resolutions were not thereby fixed against vice, and firmly rooted in the cause of piety and virtue ; it could have no good effect. For these necessary means of goodness would soon die away, if they affect not the heart to the purposes of an honest conversation in the world ; and if they do not work thus in us, they will soon vanish like the seed that was carelessly thrown on the pathway. It is observable that the word* repentance, in the gospel, does not come up to the meaning of the original term

* IT may be right to observe here the difference between *μεταμέλεια*, which only signifies uneasiness, sorrow, or torment arising from the effect of an evil action on the mind ; this often drives men to madness or suicide ; whereas *μετάνοια* implies a renovation of the mind by detestation of, and sorrow for evil, to the embracing and cleaving with our whole heart to that which is good. See 1 Ep. Cor. 7. chap. v. 7 and 27. St. Matt. v. 3 and 5.

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in the Greek.—The nearest word is *newness of life* ; this is the only true sign of our conversion to God, and that we are sincere and unfeigned in our outward sorrow for past sins, and our resolutions to future godliness. A good life is the grand testimony of our belief both in God and Christ, when either at church or the altar. If men are once resolved to lead good lives, and walk in the fear of God and obedience to his commandments, they will necessarily hate sin ; be sincerely sorry for their past offences ; and, with earnestness and sincerity, ask forgiveness of God. On this condition, even under the old covenant, and much more under Christ will they obtain forgiveness of their sins, and be cleansed from all unrighteousness.

“ If the wicked man will turn from all
 “ his sins which he hath committed,
 “ and keep all my statutes, and do that
 “ which is lawful and right, he shall surely
 “ ly

“ ly live, he shall not die ; all the trans-
 “ gressions which he hath committed shall
 “ not be mentioned unto him ; in his
 “ righteousness that he hath done shall he
 “ live saith the Lord of hosts.” The whole
 then it is plain lies in this ; that we for
 the future abstain from wickedness, and
 do that which is lawful and right, and
 we shall save our souls alive. The
 grand point is, how we live after the
 sacrament, and any other religious office
 in God’s holy church ? To say only “ I
 “ repent, and hope God will forgive me
 “ my past sins, on my future obedience,
 “ through Christ”—this is a sufficient pre-
 paration. The proof of it, however, must be
 seen in our future conduct and behaviour ;
 whether we leave off all those sins and
 transgressions we before lived in the com-
 mission of, and study to serve and obey
 God ; and this we shall, at all times, be
 able to discover by a short retirement,
 and

and calling our ways to remembrance ; and we shall soon learn whether our feet are going on still in wickedness, or in the commands and testimonies of our Creator.

THIS is the only means of making both the church and altar a most reasonable, holy and profitable service ; and I will add, of the sacrament a most comfortable and refreshing duty. Here we do spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood ; here do we dwell in Christ and Christ in us ; we are one with Christ and Christ with us. Here do we call to remembrance all his loving kindneses towards us ; and confirm our love and obedience to him, by reminding ourselves of that eternal weight of glory, which his bloodshed has purchased for us.

WHO

Who then can think of these things, and not attend to the conditions upon which they are offered; which are both easy and natural? Let us but follow the guidance of our reason, and we shall find ourselves necessitated to obey God in all things; not only for the sake of our eternal reward in the next world, but for the perfection of our nature in this.—Religion is only the perfection of reason; and we need but to examine ourselves, and call our ways to remembrance, and we shall soon acknowledge that the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light. We shall soon see the propriety, as well as necessity, of turning our feet to God's testimonies; which will soon hurry us on that we delay not to keep his commandments; as being the highest comfort to us in this world, as well as the only means of eternal glory and happiness in the

AND SEARCHING INTO OUR WAYS. III

the next, through Jesus Christ our Lord,
&c. &c.

To whom with the Father and Holy
Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, and
worship world without end. Amen.

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S E R M O N VII.

THE SERVICE OF CHRISTIANITY
ALONE IS PERFECT FREEDOM.

ST. JOHN VIII. 36.

IF THE SON THEREFORE SHALL MAKE
YOU FREE, YE SHALL BE FREE INDEED.

TH E R E is not any thing so natural and
dear to man as liberty, nor anything
more averse and shocking to his nature
than slavery: consequently our Lord could
not possibly have fixed on any motives more
striking and coercive to the Jewish people,
to engage them first to look into their
ways and desert all their iniquities, than
by telling them whilst they continued in sin,
H they

they were in a state of real bondage. "Who-
 "soever committeth sin," is, saith he, "a
 "servant to sin." And what could our
 blessed Saviour have advanced, with a
 greater probability of bringing men over
 to his doctrine, than by telling them in
 the next place, that whomsoever he made
 free, was free indeed? This method of
 drawing our attention to the dictates of
 religion, and fixing our minds with un-
 avoidable steadiness to its advantages, and
 placing, at one view, and in an indisput-
 able and self-convicting light, the great
 misery entailed on infidelity and evil
 works, has been the constant practice with
 all the sacred writers.

Thus we find, in the scriptures, that
 religion is frequently stiled wisdom and
 riches; and, in different places, it has al-
 most all the appellations which we fix to
 things, pleasant and desirable. And in
 like

like manner, vice is placed before our sight under all the figures of deformity and aversion; it is called the dross of the earth, deceitful in appearance, and hurtful in the trial; and David tells us; the essential difference between virtue and vice is so great, That it is much better to be poor with the preservation of our virtue, than obtain the highest pinnacle of honour with the reward of iniquity. "I had rather," says he, "be a door-keeper in the house of my God;" that is, the most menial office in life, and a consciousness of our pleasing God, is much better than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness; than, at the price of our integrity and the loss of our innocence, to gain the transitory pleasures which attend the votaries of sin.

BUT the three chief metaphors which Christ and his Apostles make use of, to draw

116 CHRISTIANITY ALONE IS FREEDOM.

our minds from the works of darkness, and ardently inflame them with desire of being converted to Christianity, are those of light, life, and of liberty : three properties so essentially necessary to our very existence, that without either of them God's gift of creation seems scarce worthy of acceptance. Do not imagine here that I mean to derogate from the goodness of our Almighty Father, or that we do not lie under the greatest obligation to him for our wonderful creation. This would be ingratitude to the highest degree ; this would be employing that distinguishing mark of our superiority above the brute creation to a bad purpose indeed, even to the dishonour of him that gave it. But however, were men inclined to act thus ungratefully, and reproach God for the irregularities they may fancy in the world ; they can have no room to do it from our Lord's telling the Jews that they were
with-

without light, life, or liberty in the world. For to what can you attribute the want of these inestimable blessings? To God Almighty! by no means: but as St. Paul observes, "it is even owing to our own lusts and passions."

God created man pure and spotless, gave them reason for their guide, and his own sure promise for their protection.—But our first parents, listening to the insinuation of Satan, deprived us of God's peculiar care; and then we were left to our own unassisted reason: which the temptations of the world, the allurements of sin, and the industry of our great adversary soon overpowered, and made mankind victims to God's displeasure by sin and disobedience. Though, notwithstanding this, our creator has never left himself without witness of his care and goodness for mankind, and his earnest desire of their turning to him with sincere hearts, that he might forgive them their

iniquities, and make them happy with the blessings of his favours, yet you find when our Lord came down upon earth, all true holiness was banished from the world. The heathen nations were sunk into the most abandoned idolatry; and the Jews, if possible, by their corruptions, and traditions, were still more estranged from true holiness and virtue. That he with just reason called them an ignorant, lost, and slavish people. For their minds were darkened with sin, their hopes of eternal life utterly confused and uncertain, and their liberty gone, and were become vassals to the Roman government.

IN my following discourse, I shall more particularly illustrate these points, and endeavour to treat them in such a manner as to make them a matter of profit and improvement to ourselves. First then, that the Jews were in a state of darkness

ness. I do not here mean that God had voluntarily placed them in this deplorable situation; for we all know to the contrary. God not only had given them the use of reason in common with the rest of the creation; which, properly attended to, was a sufficient guide for them, and indeed to us too; for as a Roman satyrift observes, “No man guilty is acquitted in his own mind; and virtue will always receive applause in the breast of its own master.”

BUT besides all this, God gave unto the Jews a peculiar promulgation of his will; declared unto them his resolutions to punish iniquity and reward obedience; therefore we cannot attribute their ignorance and darkness to God's neglect or aversion to them. To what then, will you say, was it owing? The answer is easy and natural; to the very same causes from

which our sins and iniquities proceed; from a wilful darkness, or professed disbelief; the allurements of disobedience, the false appearance of vice, and the seeming hardships of virtue. The glory of this world was too great to be given up, for neglected virtue; and the praises of men were more tempting in their eyes, than the praises of God. Agreeable to this depravity of heart, instead of making the commandments of their creator the rule of their conduct, they interpreted the law according to their own vitiated palates; they were very strict in forms and ceremonies, from a political view of keeping up their pomp and dignity; and neglected the weightier matters of the law, truth and justice; which require not, nor love not the pageantry of grandeur and parade; but convey to the conscience, like its own great master, in a still small voice, the joys of a well-spent life. It would be taking up too much

much of your time to consider particularly all the innovations and corruptions of this remarkable people, whereby they made the laws of their Creator of no effect, and in the midst of light walked in voluntary darkness. Let it therefore suffice, to mention one or two of the most striking and improving to us in their application. And first, you find they had entirely erased that most just and natural of all laws, honour and reverence of children towards their parents; the just tribute of care and tenderness for them in their second childhood, who had, with love and anxiety, attended to their wants in their first infancy, If they gave the money to the altar, we read they were excused from all attention to their father and mother, however poor and necessitous. Our Lord severely rebukes their ignorance in this respect; their iniquitous avarice, annulling that commandment of honouring our parents, with a promise

mise of length of life to those who obey its injunctions.

I CANNOT here forbear mentioning a similar doctrine to this in the church of Rome; that your leaving your substance among your relations and friends, however necessitous, is not any virtue; but if you leave it to the disposal of the Pope, he will immediately give you a passport for heaven, and an assurance of but a small stay in their fancied state of purgatory: though perhaps, this legacy is the natural right of many poor helpless relations, who for want of it are labouring under the hardships of sickness and poverty. How greatly must the minds of these men be either overwhelmed with darkness or iniquity, who in so plain a case, prefer the traditions of their impious forefathers, to the positive law of God! But what is it that pride and avarice will
not

not attempt? They look not upon things as they are, but endeavour to make them subservient to their own wicked purposes. Wealth is their virtue, and ambition their religion; they know no doctrine but that of self-interest, and in reality attend to no God but mammon. But can we commend these men, and esteem them worthy of imitation? God forbid! they may plan what schemes they please, and the wicked may enjoy their own devices; but in the end it will not go well with them. Few evil men I believe, in this world, escape the pangs of a wounded conscience, the torments of a guilty mind; which make their sensual pleasures rather a dear purchase unto them. But if, through a perpetual hurry, and an uninterrupted scene of vice, they can for a while keep out this busy monitor, this piercing scrutinizer of our actions! there certainly will be a day, when God the great searcher of our hearts will

will lay open to all men every word and thought we have entertained or spoke during our abode here. He to whom all our hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, will then open the books of life and death; then will virtue assume her just seat of superiority and triumph, and vice (to the great confusion of those who were so unthinking as to follow her steps,) will shew herself in proper colours, and condemn her unhappy attendants to the shades of misery and destruction. Let men therefore, argue upon the commandments of God as they please; and, like the Jews, refine from them their natural power and obligation; it may do perhaps with those who are as bad as themselves, but will have no effect on the immutability of God; who will reward or condemn them according to their obedience or neglect of

of those precepts which he has given us for our direction and guide through life.

ANOTHER instance of the great ignorance and darkness of the Jews at the appearance of our Saviour, is their want of common humanity, and common charity ; which they lived in the violation of, not as a breach, but as they grossly thought in compliance with the God of Israel : a principle so horrid and brutish, that even the very heathens themselves, with all their impurities, never attributed to their God. We read that they imagined their deity would have been displeased with them even to have relieved a stranger, though they found him robbed and wounded by a set of villains ; they disdained so much as to eat with a stranger, and were utterly averse to any communication with mankind, as partakers of the same species. What character can be a greater
mark

mark of degeneracy and blindness concerning God's nature than this? We are not to make all mankind our acquaintance, nor every one we meet our bosom friend; but yet we are the children of one common father; we all bear the same image, and are perceptible of the same passions; this is enough to engage us in a common affection, to universal benevolence, and a general propensity to do good to as many as fall within the circle of our sphere, and consistent with our nearer connections and alliances in life. (But to make a difference of sentiments, as an excuse to leave a poor distressed and wounded fellow-creature on the highway: to argue it as a tenet of religion, to shut their eyes to his conditions and stop their ears to his groans: how must such a people be waxen gross and dull in their sentiments of that God, whose mercy is over all his works, and maketh the sun to shine on the
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just and unjust, and is the perpetual preserver of the world and all that there in is ! These particulars are abundantly sufficient to convince us, that the Jews had (as Isaiah alloweth) their “ hearts waxed gross, and “ their ears dull of hearing, and their eyes “ closed that they could not perceive “ that which was right.” This was eminently fulfilled in their behaviour towards Christ ; for they would not attend to his divine words and works, but even condemned them ; and at last crucified our Lord himself under a pretence of his violating what they called the laws of the God of Israel. They had nothing to accuse him of, worthy of death even Herod and Pilate themselves declared ; only some certain frivolous questions about their own traditional laws, for which reason Pilate was willing (for their pleasure) to chastise our Lord and let him go. But they would not, and even made our Saviour worse than a com-

common murderer ; they asked forgiveness for him who had killed one of their countrymen, and crucified Jesus whose whole time was employed in doing good : so great is the power of darkness, and so dangerous the power of this world, when lodged in the hands of men of lost and abandoned principles !—Let us now proceed to the next point ; that the Jews were without life in the world. The meaning of being without life is, that they had no well grounded assurance of a future state. That the Jews were strangers to this, is very evident from many parts of scripture. They might have some glimmering notions of it, but had no authority sufficient to fortify and establish their faith in this grand article.

WHEN our Lord tells them of their father Abraham, that he knew him, they were amazed, and he seemed unto them as one that spoke falsely ; “ Thou art,”
 say

say they, "not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" And when he told them that "whosoever drank of the water which he should give them, should never thirst nor see death," they were highly offended. "Why," say they "Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead; whom makest thou thyself?" And you find, in general, they paid little attention to his affirming his kingdom not to be of this world; for their common expectation of a Messiah was to rescue them out of earthly bondage, and make them Lords of the whole earth. And indeed, such was their manner of life, that they could have no relish for celestial pleasures; they were too much immersed in sensual delights to entertain any taste for the joys of heaven.

You may observe, that the Sadducees notions of a future state, if there was such

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a thing, were wholly terrestrial; they imagined it to be nothing more than a continuance of the same course of actions as in this world; and upon this plan, they thought to have confounded our Saviour, in enquiring in what manner alliances and connections could be fixed in the other world, which were made in consequence of death in this; but our Lord's reply was, that they knew not the scriptures, nor the power of God; for in his father's kingdom, we should live as the angels of God, and lay aside mortality with all its attendants; and become spiritual and immortal. This was their notion of life eternal: which in fact, amounts to nothing better than a total ignorance, or professed disbelief; and if we look into the pages of Heathen philosophy, it is much the same; many wished for it, and many indulged themselves with the hopes of a future existence, but their reasonings about it

it failed them. The doctrine was not any where established, upon any reasonable and convincing principles, till Christ brought it to light. It was our Lord alone therefore, who can with any propriety, be said to have shewed life and immortality to men.

SOME ungrateful men, since the times of christianity, pretend that a future state is apparent enough from reason, without any authority from heaven; but we find, in their writings, that they fight against Christ with his own arms. The proper way to learn whether a revelation was wanting, is to read the works of the most eminent writers before our Saviour; here we have unassisted nature, and may from hence judge what human nature is capable of doing. If they will thus act, they must unavoidably see the necessity of a revelation. Those few who pretended,

or wished to believe another life, so blended their opinions with absurd conjectures about the nature of that state ; and most of them, in other parts of their works, as flatly disbelieved, that it was impossible to form any general system for the world; and all of them were at a loss, in what manner the divine justice was to be appeased for our sins and transgressions : therefore, my brethren, I think we ought to be thankful; and look upon it as a saying worthy of our most grateful acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save and deliver us, on our repentance and amendment. Another set of men are of a contrary manner of thinking to these proud boasters of human reason; and do not think the doctrine of the gospel sufficient for salvation, and will not believe themselves in the way of happiness, unless God gives them frequent inward illuminations, and divine impulses,

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for further confirmation of this faith and assurance of eternal life. I scarce know which of the two is most to blame; they are certainly both culpable. Well might Abraham say, "that was God to send an angel from heaven, some people would still want a further confirmation."

I BELIEVE unassisted human reason was not capable of teaching this lesson of a future life; but at the same time, I am well convinced that a serious attention to Moses and the prophets, and above all to the gospel of Christ, and the precepts of his life and word, is abundantly sufficient for our salvation; and stands in no need of those enthusiastic effusions of the spirit, which some men pretend to have had as a confirmation of their faith. I come now in the last place, to shew you that the Jews, in our Saviour's time, were without liberty.

THE Jews thought our Lord spoke of the liberty of this world ; and therefore were much offended with him, to suspect them of slavery who boasted themselves as descended from the stock of Abraham by the free woman.

BUT, even in this view, Jesus was right for they were now under the power of Rome, even so much that their governor who was convinced in himself of our Saviour's innocence and was determined to let him go ; yet on being told it was as much as his friendship was worth with Cæsar, he dare not do it ; and made his own conscience and integrity of judgment subservient to the power of Rome ; and in short, it is evident from history, that the whole nation was in the most deplorable of all situations, which is that of a state of licentious slavery ; and no wonder, for iniquity will eat into the foundation
of

of any state like moths into a garment. God first established them as his peculiar people, for being more zealous in their obedience than other nations; but when they degenerated and fell into the abominations of the wicked, he then suffered them to be led captive. They being of the seed of Abraham, was of no service; for God could raise up seed from the very stones as children to Abraham, without being obliged to make them, who had through corruption become disobedient, the children of light. But however, this was not the kind of liberty that our Lord spoke of, which is that of the mind. He meant that they were in a state of slavery from their lusts and passions, and that he alone was able to make them free indeed. This is a worse state of slavery than the former; for who can be a greater slave than one who is ruled by the ungovernable sway of his own appetites; he is

something in the same condition with the Centurion's servants, who were ordered to go there, and they go; come here, and they come; do this, and they do it.

How does a man lose power over himself by inordinate passions! how does anger put him off his guard, and hurry him unwillingly to actions which give him pain, perhaps, for the rest of his life! how do envy and malice force us, against our wills, to speak, and to do those things which we know are wrong! what a dupe and slave is the wordly and avaricious man, to this sinful passion, contrary to the peace of his life and judgment of his own soul! he has not power to assert his own liberty of setting bounds to his desire; and dares not say, I have enough, and will now sit down and gratefully enjoy the blessings of Providence. How does ambition enslave the soul, and in the midst
of

of every requisite for happiness and honour, refuse to let a man be at rest, and hurries him on from phantom to phantom, that he dies before he gets to the state he thinks worth living for and enjoying ! Thus we might trace and examine every other inordinate passion and desire, and we should find in what manner they tyrannize over us, and make us slaves to their power.

MAN consists of two parts, mind and body : one must govern ; the mind indeed, has the just title to this part. She ought to direct, and the body obey ; but with the Jews, it was the contrary ; their minds were subject to the body ; they were tied down with all the corruptions of human nature ; and were obedient, or rather enslaved, to the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Our Lord tells them, that it was he alone that relieved them from this state of slavery

very, and could make them free indeed; and certainly every one must allow, who reads the gospel with an honest and good heart, with candour and impartiality, that nothing is more suitable or likely for this purpose, than the precepts of that glorious covenant, confirmed and ratified by the spotless life of our blessed Lord, and the great innocency and virtue of his Apostles and followers. Before our Lord, no man knew how sins were to be forgiven. Though men did see the folly of their proceedings, and order their future steps in the way of godliness; who was to loose and deliver them from the chain of their former sins? Who was to break the bonds of their past transgressions? Here all men were in the dark, till Christ appeared, and told them that his blood would be a full and perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; he would bear their iniquities, and take upon him their offences, if so be they would

would turn to God, and (as he said to the woman to whom he forgave the sin of adultery) sin no more; for if we did, a worse thing might come upon us. How are we therefore, my brethren, bound by all the ties of love, gratitude and interest, to look well into our ways; to thorough search the innermost parts of our souls, to see if there be any secret longings after sin; to examine well if wickedness has not some dominion over us; and if so, to immediately exert ourselves and vindicate our liberty; to free our souls from the servitude of Satan, and embrace that service which alone is perfect freedom.

CHRIST through his blood, will deliver us from the power of darkness, and make us free servants, if we will but attend to his direction. Vice may put on the deceitful appearance of freedom and happiness; but in a while it will shew its sting

140 CHRISTIANITY ALONE IS FREEDOM.

sting, and we shall find in ourselves that worm of anger and remorse which will never die. But if, like good and provident christians, we enter, and faithfully continue in the service of our Lord, he will then make us free indeed; that is, he will not only obtain, through his blood, a perfect remission of our sin; but for his sake, will our good actions entitle us to the joys of heaven, there to dwell, in mansions of never ending happiness, with God our eternal father, to whom with the son, &c. be ascribed all honour, glory and worship, world without end. Amen.

S E R M O N VII.

ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

PSALM xciv. 9.

HE THAT PLANTED THE EAR, SHALL HE NOT
HEAR? HE THAT FORMED THE EYE, SHALL HE
NOT SEE? HE THAT CHASTISETH THE HEA-
THEN, SHALL NOT HE CORRECT? HE THAT
TEACHETH MAN KNOWLEDGE, SHALL HE NOT
KNOW?

IT is not well agreed when, or on what
occasion, or by whom this Psalm was
written; but, in all probability, the great
cruelties and wicked blasphemies of the
neigh-

neighbouring heathens towards the Jews, gave rise to it*. But it is a point very immaterial in itself; whatever might be its origin, the reasoning is good, just and true; and if men are so inclined, it may be a matter of profitable reflection to them. First, then, I shall consider the justness and nature of the Psalmist's reasoning on this subject; and, secondly, in what manner we may form the best conceptions of these

* Dr. Grey and Mr. Green's interpretation of the verse favours this meaning, for they will have the verb *יָדָע*, understood, which signifies to thoroughly know so as take cognizance of, as used in Deut. xxxi. v. 21. Green thus renders it, for which see his note, and Mercer's Lexicon, under the word *יָדָע*.

“ Cannot he who ruleth the nations reprove them ? ”

“ Cannot he who teacheth men knowledge, take notice of them ? ”

It seems indeed a Psalm of comfort to the Jews, and a sure confidence that their unprovoked enemies should not go unpunished.

attributes

attributes of God's immensity, and filling the whole world with his continual presence; and then lastly, what uses we ought to make of it.

1st. THEN I am to consider the justness and nature of the Psalmist's reasoning on this subject. And this assurance of God's continual attendance on, and knowledge of us, he draws from his being; our Creator. As God, as David elsewhere observes, saw all our substance yet being imperfect, and in his book were all our members written; it is but natural to conclude, that God is well acquainted with the uses and purposes of them. And certainly must, in himself, enjoy those perfections in the highest manner possible, which he imparts to his creatures. Could God give us the faculty of hearing, and not be capable of hearing himself; could the Almighty form the seeing eye, and yet not be able to see himself;

could our heavenly Father give us an understanding heart, and yet be without knowledge*? The Creator surely must enjoy all the qualifications of the thing created. No one can give another what he himself hath not. As therefore man perceives in himself the power of seeing, hearing, and reasoning; the Psalmist, with great justness and propriety, concludes that God, the Creator and bestower of them, must enjoy these attributes in his own nature; which is, indeed, the only conception we can form of God. We know nothing further of his particular attributes and qualities, than by raising the highest and most perfect idea possible of our own qualities, and then attribute them to God our all perfect Father. This is the greatest and fullest

* Isaiah xxix. v. 16.—Shall the work say of him that made it, he made me not? Or shall the thing framed, say of him that framed it, he had no understanding?

idea we have of perfection; and by acknowledging these to be in God, we confess God to be as great and as perfect as our weak and feeble minds are capable of exalting him who is all perfection, and far above every thing that angel or man can conceive. Thus we find in ourselves the power of seeing; but then we experience that it is limited to a certain distance, and depends upon the state and structure of that organ, which we call the eye. Now in our conceptions of God, to keep up to the allusion of the Psalmist, as he made this eye, we conclude that he himself can see; but then we do not confine him, as ourselves, to any distance or external inlet or organ, but *conclude* that he views all things at all distances with a single glance of perfection, and that nothing is hid from his sight; and this we express and acknowledge to the best in our power, by calling it the all seeing eye of God, which

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penetrates into all the world, like the beams of the sun in its daily course. Thus again, as we ourselves are capable of hearing; surely, saith the author of my text, you will allow that God who gave us this power, can also hear. But then, in respect to this, as well as every other part of our frame and constitution, it is confined in its power and place. It is alone to be enjoyed through the organs of our ear, and that prescribed to certain strength of sound; the whisper must not be too low, nor the voice too high, nor the distance too great, either of which would render it incapable of hearing. But we do not thus reason of God's hearing. All voices are alike to him, and no distance can exclude the sound of our words from his ears. And this is all the notion our imperfect state can form of the all-hearing ear of our Creator. And lastly, we to our great comfort, find in ourselves that grand distinguishing mark of our superiority above every

other creature which God has created; I mean the power of reasoning, of distinguishing between good and evil; to be able to make use of our past conduct for the better; form our present behaviour, and even to look forward to ages to come, and thereby to secure the provision for those that are yet to be born. And can we enjoy these glorious privileges, and not make the first use of them in drawing this just and natural inference from it; that the Almighty who breathed into the soul of man the power of knowledge and understanding, must himself be all powerful in wisdom and knowledge? That expression used by Moses in the 2 Chap. of Genesis, is truly beautiful and instructing: That God after he had formed man out of the dust of the earth, the seventh verse informs us, "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul;" or as an old translation has it with greater propriety, "he breathed

“into his face the breath of life.” Man had equal life with the rest of the creation, but this breath of God was the inspiration of the Holy Spirit upon him; by which he partook of the divine perfection, in the power of reasoning, and all those other glorious attendants on it, which we enjoy above the rest of the creation. We are told in scripture, that the breath of God bestowed on us this reasoning faculty; which, in some measure, will give us a faint conception of God’s knowledge. A single breath from God gave us that knowledge we enjoy; from which we may conclude; that wisdom and knowledge make up the life of God, even as breath sustaineth the life of man; and that there is as much difference between our imperfect understanding, and the knowledge of God, as there is between one blast of our breath and all eternity. Our knowledge is, at best, but small, and to be attained with
difficulty

difficulty; but all things are known and understood by the Almighty with the same ease, as we draw our breath. And shall not, saith my text, he punish? He who hath given man reason for his guide, shall not he punish those who will not make a proper use of it? He who hath told them what his will and pleasure is, and given man an understanding heart to teach him what is holy, just, and true; shall not he punish those who live in wilful transgressions? To say our passions mislead us, and why did God give us them, and then punish us for following their directions, is arguing like foolish, wicked and ungrateful creatures. A man may as well set his own house on fire, and then call fire an evil, as to suffer his unruly lusts and passions to corrupt and debase him, and lay the fault on God and his passions. All our sensual passions are good and profitable in themselves, but they were never intended to

rule and controul us. Reason and religion are their guides and pilots, and if we will follow their directions, they will safely steer us through the troubled waves of this life; and will forward, and render more pleasant and agreeable, our voyage to eternity. But if we will not make use of these aids and assistances, are we to wonder that our passions toss us about; and that we are like a ship in a tempestuous sea, without a pilot, drove from rock to rock, till at last we split upon the precipice of atheism, and despair?

HAVING thus gone through the examination of the text, I come in the next place, to consider in what manner we may form the best conceptions of those attributes of God's immensity, and filling the whole world with his continual presence. This is a thing that we, in a great measure, learnt from the treating on the first head; that

that our manner of forming our conceptions of God's continual presence with, and observance of us, is to be got by enlarging our own faculties and powers to the highest degree of perfection possible; and then to attribute these to God, and to assure ourselves that he enjoys them, and every other exaltation, honour and superiority which can belong to him who has no equal, or any that can come near him in perfection. Thus we hear and see, and understand in part, and our powers are limited; but all things are seen and heard and known of God, and all places accessible to him. God is a spirit, and fills the whole world. Man is a substance, and contained in the world. We can occupy no more space than the place of a small substance; but the heaven of heavens cannot contain the Almighty. Every ill disorder, or obstruction, deadens our faculties of perception; but who shall controul

the Almighty, or set bounds to his power; or hide themselves from his sight; or go out of his hearing? If we go up to heaven, he is there; down into hell, he is there also; into the remotest parts of the earth or sea, he is present with us. God hears, sees, and inspects us every where, and in all places. He is about our paths, and about our beds, and spies out all our actions; his eye penetrates the darkest corner; his ear listens and remarks the slowest whispers; and his knowledge discovers the most artful and cunning devices of the heart.

THE way then, to fill our minds with the most exalted, and lively idea of God's perfection in all things, is at once to conclude that he hath no bounds or limits. We cannot say, thus far can he come, and no further; thus far will his eye or heart reach us, and no further. Thus far doth his knowledge reach, and no further. But
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we are to conclude that the presence and attributes of our Creator diffuse and spread themselves equally into all possible places, and further than we can imagine or conceive. No privacy or darkness, not even the heart of man can exclude his knowledge. God is every where; he taketh knowledge of all things; every thing which is created was created by and for him; and unto him are all his works known. This is the notion, and this the manner of forming it, that we ought to entertain of that God in whom we live, move, and have our being.

I come now, in the last place, to the uses we ought to make of it. As thus we find God is ever with us, his eye ever upon our actions, his ear ever hearkening to our words, and his knowledge ever marking the ways of our heart; we ought, as God is ever with us, to set him always before us. Whenever we set about any
 thing

thing, let us remember that the eye of God is upon us, whether it be in his immediate service, or in our daily intercourse in the world. Thus, when we approach the church, God's peculiar habitation and hallowed seat; here more immediately his eye is fixed on us, and his ear attentive to our proceedings; and therefore we ought to behave with great circumspection, that we offend not in either thought, word, or deed; that our whole deportment be solemn, grave, and devout; that all our words and actions be employed in the service of that God, to whom, whilst in this place, we are entirely sacrificed, and devoted; and that every offence committed in this sacred assembly, is doubly heinous, and will, in the highest and most aggravating manner, bring down upon us the displeasure, and wrath of our Creator. And in like manner we ought to remember, that when we
absent

absent ourselves from the Church of God, that the eye of God is upon us, and his ear open to the voice of our words during that time; and his understanding penetrates into our hearts, and knoweth whether the excuse is allowable, or whether it is not owing to indolence, evil fashion, luxury, or irreligion; either of which will be our confusion and punishment at the day of judgment. And lastly, we should remember, in our daily transactions with mankind, that the eye of the Almighty is upon every proceeding: he sees, and hears, and understands every deed, word, and purpose of our hearts; who knows when we act fairly and honestly with our neighbours; when we use them with deceitful artifice, and shameful dishonesty. God marks the ways of those who lie in wait to deceive the simple, and take advantage of such as cannot discover their iniquity. But thus far I have only considered

sidered the dark and gloomy part of the argument, a part which I hope belongs but to few if any of us here; but those who have been so unhappy as to be inattentive to these great and important parts of our religion and duty, let me earnestly exhort them to think on these things; to know and reflect that God is ever attentive to us, and marks every transgression we commit, and will at the last call us to an account for them. The fool may say tush! God will forget—he will take no knowledge of it—but it is only the most flagrant and abandoned fool that can think or say so; for the least understanding may teach us, that not any thing can escape God: and as Solomon says, the sinner will certainly find that he was only reserved for the day of judgment. These reflections must induce a man, not entirely lost in sin and wickedness, to order his future behaviour with more circumspection and care; not to offend God,

either

either in profane swearing, or the pollution of his sabbaths; by intemperance, by ingratitude or deceit, or any other evil works: as we thus find God searches them all out, and will hereafter bring us to punishment and shame. Thus having gained an abhorrence, and resolution to vindicate ourselves from the power of sin, we shall have a right to consider the other more amiable and engaging advantages arising from God's knowing all things, and his resolution to finally deal with all of us according to our deservings. This advantage arises from our consciousness that our virtue and goodness is not hid from God; but he both beholds, and will in his good time reward us. We need not even let our right hand know what our left hand does, nor be under the least fear or apprehension that our good deeds will fall to the ground, and come to nothing; for God is our Father, and seeth and knoweth all things. If we
pray

pray to him in private, he will reward us openly, and bring all good actions to light, that the least of them shall not lose their reward. What a noble and coercive incitement is this to us, not to be weary in well-doing; to bravely resist the temptations of sin, to bear up with fortitude and christian courage, whatever may be our lot, or afflictions in this sublunary scene of things; and invariably to pursue the path of religion and virtue, as we know its end is everlasting life? No one loses any thing in this world, for the sake of his religion, but he shall hereafter receive four-fold into his bosom. What a different encouragement is this, from what the world too frequently gives us. For, are we exactly scrupulous not to let slip any opportunity of attending the public worship of God; it oftentimes gains no better name than hypocrisy; and if we do not attend the church we are justly charged with wickedness

edness and irreligion. If we relieve the distresses of our fellow-christians, in a public and open manner, it is very common to style it ostentation and pride. And if we do our good deeds in private, they are not believed, and we are called penurious and uncharitable. If we relieve our friend in distress, the world oftentimes attributes it to some self-interested view of our own; and if we neglect them, it is called pride, or disrespect. And lastly, when afflictions or misfortunes come upon us, though great or unavoidable, they often do receive censure, instead of charity, and a stone instead of bread. Thus, my beloved, was good and evil, virtue and vice, right and wrong, to depend merely on the opinion of the world, in what a state of uneasiness and perplexity should we live? What an happy and comfortable reflection is it, then, to remember that we have a kind, and just, and benevolent Father in heaven, who
 knoweth

knoweth all things ; who sees our good actions, and takes an account of all the wrongs and troubles we suffer in this world ; that if our unprejudiced heart does not condemn us, and we find it right towards God, we need not fear the misconstructions of the world ? Not that we are to live regardless of an earthly fame, by no means ! but as far as possible, to please all men ; but then, at the same be resolutely fixed to sin with no one ; to suffer neither the praise nor the shame of this world, to cause our ruin, and destruction in the next. God is to be our final judge, not man : to him we must approve ourselves ; and our first and important point is, that our ways are acceptable in his sight, whose esteem is our eternal happiness, and whose displeasure is our greatest ruin. And indeed, this in the end, is the most likely means of gaining the good will and approbation of men ; for as Solomon observes, “ The man who feareth the Lord,

"Lord, he even maketh his enemies to be
 "at peace with him."

To conclude, since then we find from what has been said, that God attends us in all our ways, sees, observes, and remarks every transaction of our lives, nay every thought of our heart; let us, in sincerity and earnestness, endeavour to walk in holiness and purity of life; let us live as if God was constantly looking upon us, do all things as if he beheld us. It certainly behoves us both to think and act thus; for it is most certainly true, that we ever are in God's sight; yea, he never departeth from us. Virtue will make him behold us with an eye of pleasure and complacency; and vice with an eye of indignation and wrath. Let us then, resolve to hate iniquity, and follow after righteousness, and conclude with the same words, that David uses at the end of his most di-

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vine psalm, on the omnipresence and all-seeing eye of God. "Try us, O God, and seek the ground of our hearts; prove us, and examine our thoughts. Look well if there be any wickedness in us, and lead us into the way of everlasting life," for the merits of thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom with the Father, and Holy-Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, and worship, world without end. Amen.

S E R M O N VIII.

ON THE POWER AND AWFUL
MAJESTY, OF THE LORD OUR
GOD.

PSALM cxiv. 3.

THE SEA SAW THAT AND FLED: JORDAN WAS
DRIVEN BACK. THE MOUNTAINS SKIPPED
LIKE RAMS, AND THE LITTLE HILLS LIKE
YOUNG SHEEP.

IT is observable in the sacred writings,
that whenever God makes his perso-
nal appearance in the world, all nature
seems sensible of it: not only every thing

which hath breath praiseth the Lord, but all things which he hath created acknowledge and proclaim the Author of their being and existence. But not any part of Scripture gives a more lively and striking instance of this kind, than the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, and their continuance for forty years in the wilderness, and their passage over Jordan, into the promised land of Canaan. This psalm is a short historical relation of that part of holy writ; and is here set forth and extolled, with all the elegance and perfection of poetic imagery and figure.

WE are not informed by David, on what particular occasion this psalm was written; neither is it scarce even conjectured by any commentators on it, what might originally give rise unto it.

BUT not to detain you with any long or needless criticisms on so unimportant a point, I will at once give you my own opinion of the matter; and then proceed to the examination of the psalm; and after that, draw from it some useful reflections, for our own advantage and improvement,

AND first, as to the occasion of the psalm: all the psalms from the one hundred and seventh inclusive, make up what are called the fifth book, or division of the psalms; and chiefly consist in recording the noble acts of the Lord, and shewing forth all his praise; in teaching mankind, that not any thing is too great, or desperate for his power and mercy to accomplish and effect. This particular psalm before us, seems therefore to be indited for the comfort and assurance of his people in every state or complexion of life; that we ought

at no time to despair, though our hopes of relief seem to be entirely removed from the natural course of things; and though the storms of adverse fortune, appear, and even actually rage horribly against us, yet as David tells us, in the forty-sixth psalm, if we will but put our trust in God we shall not be removed, for God shall help us, and that right early. No misfortune can be so outrageous, nor any calamity so tumultuous and violent, but that God can in a moment calm and serene them by his omnipotent and irresistible word, "Be still, " and know that I am God; I will be ex-
"alted by the earth, and all that therein
"is;" and whosoever trusteth in me shall never fail; for under the wings of my power and mercy shall he be safe from all his adversaries.

THIS then, in general may be said to be the drift or design of the psalm; that

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as God has all nature at his command, we need not fear its power, or be dismayed at its threatening storms. In what particular manner this is to be understood, will be best considered in the latter part of this discourse, when we come to apply the psalm immediately to ourselves. Let us now then proceed to the examination of it.

THOUGH this psalm is so very short as to contain but eight verses, yet we have represented unto us in the most powerful light, four great and signal interpositions of God, in his bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt into the land of Canaan.

THE psalmist seems almost lost and confused with the splendor of God's greatness and mercy towards the children of men; and speaks like one frantic with gratitude and admiration. Mr. Addison, in one of his truly sublime and improving poems, be-

gins somewhat in this rapturous and eager style. He saith

“ When all thy mercies, O my God,

“ My rising soul surveys,

“ Transported with the view, I'm lost

“ In wonder, love, and praise !”

THESE four instances, are first, the passing of the children of Israel through the Red Sea : secondly, their preservation in the wilderness : thirdly, the delivery of the commandments at Mount Sinai : and fourthly, their passage over Jordan under Joshua, into the land of Canaan : all which signal and miraculous events, are not only mentioned, but are here forced and pressed upon the mind in such lively colours, as to engage her whole attention, and draw forth and exalt (to the highest pitch human nature is capable) every idea of divine greatness, mercy, and power. The immensity and brightness of the subject divests

vests the author of all order and regularity, in his description of the handy-works of his awful and glorious Creator.

THE wonders at the River Jordan are placed before God's appearance at Mount Sinai; and the feeding of the children of Israel, a miracle prior to them both, is placed at the very end of the psalm. But in poetical descriptions like these, (short, concise, and heavenly as it were), such inaccuracies are not blots, but beauties; they do not offend the understanding, but serve the more imperceptibly to bewilder the heart and soul into a pleasing torrent of extatic love and joy of heart, not to be raised by the methodical and cool narrations of a studied piece of history or intelligence. When the heart is full either of joy or sorrow, the tongue will be irregular and incoherent in her utterances; but then, for the most part, it is more expressive

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five and interesting, than the ordinary words of our mouth.

THE psalmist, you find, at first begins, as if he was going to give a sober and deliberate account of the children of Israel's departure out of Egypt. "When Israel, "saith he, came out of Egypt, and the "house of Jacob from amongst a strange "nation;" he had scarce pronounced these words, but he is immediately on the wing of gratitude for God's selecting his forefathers the Israelites for his peculiar people, from whom a Messiah was to spring. So soon as ever the people left Egypt, he tells us, God took up their cause, and owned Judah for his sanctuary and Israel for his dominion; he does not stay to tell us how this peculiar love and acknowledgement of God to them was shewn; and does not even refer to the thirteenth chapter of the book of Exodus, where at the

the twenty-first verse, we are told, that immediately on their leaving the land of Egypt, the Lord went before them by day, in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, to go by day and by night. This the psalmist omits, as not worthy to stop him in his full career to the grand marks of God's grandeur and Omnipotency. He is now lost, and soars at once out of sight. He will not give them leave to approach the sea; but causeth all things to prepare and make ready for the approach of his ancestors headed by the living God.

THE sea saw them and fled, leaving a dry path for them to travel over into the wilderness; "Jordan, saith he, also was "driven back." Thus does he hurry us, in a moment, forty years forward, to another miraculous and gracious interposition of Providence in favour of the Israelites; which

which you read in the second book of Joshua, how the waters came down from above, stood and rose up on a heap, and those that came down from the plain failed and were cut off, so that the children of Israel went over right against Jericho. Nay, saith he, what does not obey the presence of God? did not the mountains in Sinai, when he gave the commandments, skip like rams, and the little hills like young sheep? Here the royal songster again gives fresh springs to our ardency and love, by what the rhetoricians call a *prosopopeia*, or personation of the earth, making it thus speak to the hills and mountains (like Neptune to the winds in Virgil's storm) "What
" ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest,
" and thou Jordan, that thou wast driven
" back; ye mountains, that ye skipped
" like rams, and ye little hills like young
" sheep? To whom they all answer, (instead of remonstrating) with surprize at
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the insensibility of the earth, not to perceive that the Lord was at hand; and immediately enjoin it to bow and obey before its Creator, "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;" and then he concludes, with reminding the people, that it was one and the same God that did all these wonders. "It is that God, which for the sake of our forefathers, turned the rock into a standing water, and the flint stone into a springing well." What a glorious and stupendous description is here, of the transcendent majesty of the most high God; not to be paralleled by any of the most famous poets of antiquity. Homer gives us a faint idea of the great authority of heaven, where he tells us, when Jupiter nodded consent to the request of Thetis,

"High

“ High Heav’n with trembling, the dread signal took,
“ And all Olympus to the centre shook.”

WHAT is this, to the description we have now considered, of seas dividing, mountains skipping, and streams reverting their course? How poor and insipid is it too, compared with the account Moses gives of God’s appearance in Mount Sinai, in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Exodus: “ And Moses brought forth the
“ people out of the camp, to meet God,
“ and they stood at the nether part of the
“ mount; and Mount Sinai was altogether
“ on a smoke, because the Lord descend-
“ ed upon it in fire, and the smoke there-
“ of ascended as the smoke of a furnace,
“ and the whole mountain quaked great-
“ ly; trumpets founding, and waxing
“ louder and louder, and when the peo-
“ ple perceived the thunderings and the
“ lightnings, and the noise of the trum-
“ pets and the mountain smoking; when

“ the people saw them they removed and
“ stood afar off, and said unto Moses,
“ speak thou unto us, and we will hear;
“ let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

LET the reviler consider this, and repent in dust and ashes; who daily, hourly and almost in every sentence they utter, provoke the presence and indignation of God, by their horrid imprecations and oaths! Lastly, what is there to be met with, comparable to that description David gives in the eighteenth psalm, of God's descent from heaven for his assistance against his enemies? The fire and spirit of it seem to have carried even the poets Sternhold and Hopkins, beyond their usual strain; for Dryden is reputed to have said, that he had rather been author of those stanzas, than of all his own poetic works; this will be excuse sufficient for a repetition of them.

“ The

- " The Lord descended from above,
" And bow'd the heavens most high;
" And underneath his feet he cast,
" The darkness of the sky.
" On cherubs, and cherubims,
" Full royally he rode;
" And on the wings of mighty winds,
" Came flying all the God.

BUT it is no wonder to a Believer of the Bible, that the sacred descriptions so far excel profane ones, as they are only the wild fancies of mortal men on imaginary subjects. But the Scriptures are the true and genuine intercourse with his creatures, penned and delivered down to us, by men inspired with his holy spirit.

HAVING thus then, gone through the examination of the Psalm, I come in the last place, to draw from it some useful reflections for our own advantage and improvement.

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AND first, though it is comfortable to reflect that there is not any God so great a God as ours; yet we must not expect extraordinary interpositions, in the course of this world, for our sakes, be we ever so good and righteous. You see, the pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, were given to the Israelites; the one, because they otherwise might have been seen by the Egyptians, and more easily pursued; and, by the light by night, they travelled with greater swiftness than the Egyptians in the dark. God divided the sea for them, because they had no ships; and if they had, they knew not the paths of the sea, nor the footsteps of the great waters; and the same may be said of his feeding them in the wilderness by bread from heaven, because no industry of their own could procure it; and, from like circumstances, the waters stood on heaps for their passing over Jordan. But the whole that we must learn from

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this

this is, to put our entire trust in God; and live resigned in that state of life he has fixed for us, with chearfulness and gratitude to the Almighty, who will never forsake nor neglect his true and faithful servants; but will provide every thing which he, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, thinks most necessary and expedient for us. But secondly, we may observe from this Psalm, that doubtless the reason why God did these great things for the Israelites was, as David tells us, that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Yet you learn, and wonderful perhaps you say it was, how these people were continually rebelling against God; and instead of increasing in virtue and goodness, in proportion to God's more abundant kindness towards them, you find they left not a single sin or enormity which they practised not; and at the time Christ came upon earth, he found most of them in such a

state,

state, that he said the very worst of the Gentiles were fitter candidates, and better prepared for the reception and benefits of the gospel, than they themselves. These things are certainly not only very true, but equally astonishing; yet I am afraid, upon reflection, we shall, by our Saviour's rule, have no right to cast a stone of censure at them; for how is it with us Christians? Our religion was equally begun and established by miracles, signs and wonders. To pass over all the prophecies, from the first declaration that a seed from the woman should overcome the subtilty and power of satan, to the birth of Christ; was this not proclaimed by an extraordinary star; his baptism, by the descent of the Holy Ghost in the bodily shape of a dove; his superiority over temptation and satan, by administering angels; his being the beloved Son of God, by a voice from heaven at his baptism by John; his transfiguration before

Peter, James, and John; his crucifixion and death, by a miraculous earthquake; his resurrection, by an angel at the sepulchre; and his ascension and power at the right hand of God, by the descent of the Holy Ghost: exclusive of all the secondary proofs of the gospel truth, in the Apostles and first Preachers of this ever blessed covenant? And now, let us ask how the generality of us live in the world; and whether we, upon the whole, have a right to censure the conduct of the Israelites of old? We cannot but admire and condemn their ingratitude, if we neglect so great salvation as is offered us in the gospel; we are then more culpable than they, as their views in the promises of the Mosaical dispensation were temporal and ours are eternal. But the best way is, both in respect to them that are gone before us, as well as to those with whom we now live, to forbear our censures one of another; and

endeavour, by the uprightness of our own lives, to prevent or at least to contradict, and shame the censure of others concerning ourselves. We find God hath power and goodness sufficient to satisfy us to our hearts desire; and therefore we are sure in the end, that those who seek him diligently, will not at the last, want any thing which is good.

God by his power, carried the Israelites into Canaan out of Egypt, through every difficulty; and Christ has paved our way to eternal life; that if we will but follow his directions, as laid down in the gospel, we shall find him a ready advocate for the sins of our infirmity, at the day of judgment; and we shall then, through his intercession, be invited to a seat of eternal felicity with God in heaven; “ In whose
“ presence there is fullness of joy, and at
M 3 “ whose

“ whose right hand there are pleasures for
“ evermore.”

To whom, with the Son, and Holy
Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, and
worship, world without end. Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

ON THE INSTITUTION AND MANNER OF OBSERVING LENT.

DEUT. 27 CHAP. 26. VERSE.

CURSED BE HE THAT CONFIRMETH NOT ALL
THE WORDS OF THIS LAW TO DO THEM, AND
ALL THE PEOPLE SHALL SAY AMEN.

I BELIEVE there are many zealous advocates of the Christian religion, and strenuous adherents to the Protestant faith in particular, and as such are constant attendants at the office of the church, at all

times in their power, but on the following Wednesday; and the reason upon which they justify their absence at that time, is the more delusive and dangerous; as it appears to carry with it a soft hearing, some shew of a well grounded and laudable excuse, being done out of their great love and charity towards their neighbours. I should be very sorry to give the least check to mutual love and charity amongst mankind; particularly in so near relation as that of the same neighbourhood.

FOR as I sincerely believe not any character so pernicious in itself, or so odious in the sight of God and man as that of a busy body; of those whose study and delight are officiously to interfere with the affairs of their neighbours; never so happy as when opportunity offers them an occasion of slander, and of disturbing the happiness of those who are weak enough to be affected

with

with their idle and ill designed rattle; so on the other hand, there is not a character so amicable and engaging, or so agreeable to the true spirit of the gospel, as that of being naturally disposed to speak well of all men; and even to cover the real failings of his neighbour, when it can be done without detriment to the public.

BUT in this particular instance before us, we shall find upon examination, that it proceeds more from spiritual pride in ourselves, than any charity for our neighbour; even supposing that we were actually on this occasion to denounce God's curse upon all who offend against his commandment. It has too Pharisaical a look; and thanking God that we are not guilty of the like offences, when perhaps upon narrowly looking into our ways, we should find ourselves equally guilty before God, and stand in as much need of dreading the wrath of God

as

as any of our neighbours; this, I say, would be most probably the real case, did we on that day absolutely call down upon us the curse of God for our offences. And therefore, on every account, we ought cautiously to avoid being censurers of our neighbour's conduct, when it is well known how guilty we must appear before God. But this is a crime no one will be guilty of, would he observe our Saviour's rule, to pull out the beam first out of his own eye, before he pretends to discern the mote in his brother's eye. And every man who does this, who carefully examines his own actions, and looks into the failings of his own life, will be cautious how he censures the life and conversation of those he is connected with. In whatever light therefore, we take those denunciations, we must have very high and presumptuous notions of ourselves to keep from church merely on our neighbours account, but as in no wise belonging
unto

unto ourselves. It would look much more like reason, to alledge that we abstained from church, as unwilling to denounce God's wrath against ourselves; thinking it unreasonable that our Creator should ever enjoin us a duty that we ourselves should solemnly wish, with our own mouths, that God should curse us for our sins and iniquities. Surely it is enough for us that we acknowledge the truth of God's laws; that we know and dread the consequences of our sins, without hastening the judgment of God, by being our own ill-wishers, in voluntarily calling down the wrath of God upon ourselves. And was that the real case; was that the business of this solemn appointment; so far would I be from wondering that Christians kept from their church on that day, that I should be amazed to see any come; but this is by no means the truth. The custom, agreeable to the wise establishment of all others in our church, is just, reasonable

reasonable, and advantageous; according to sound doctrine, and conducive to our health and salvation, through Christ our Saviour. In my ensuing discourse, therefore, I shall in the first place, consider the occasion and nature of this institution; and then, secondly, in what manner we ought to employ the ensuing lent, to make it profitable to us, and answer the salutary effects for which it was designed.

1st. THEN, I am to consider the occasion and nature of this institution. God Almighty had some time before delivered to his people, by the hands of his servant Moses, the Ten Commandments; they were given in general terms; and though they directly, or indirectly comprehended all offences; yet the Canaanites afterwards sunk into very great and heinous crimes. God therefore, commanded Moses to order them to be read, when they had passed over Jordan

dan from Mount Ebel; viz. the several offences which he was determined to punish; and that it was the invariable rule of his government to act with them, according to their neglect or observance of the commands, which he now gave them. Every man therefore was to give his assent to these determinations of God, by answering amen* to each of them, as they were enumerated

* Doubtless the compilers of our liturgy were led by this chapter, to enjoin Christians also to give their assent by amen; but as people in general confine the meaning of amen to *so be it*, it might have been clearer to them, if (as after each commandment) an imploration of God's mercy was enjoined, and a petition to guard our hearts from this, or those offences; as in the communion, to incline our hearts to keep that particular commandment. Thus, after the first declaration, "Curled be the man that maketh any carved or
"molten image to worship," let the response be,
"Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts
"from offence, or offences, as the sentence requires."

Indeed,

merated by the Levites as Moses commanded. But do ye imagine from this, that by this assent to God's laws of punishing sinners, that they either wished destruction to themselves, or their neighbours? The word amen, in that place, as in several others in holy scriptures, does not imply *so be it*, or I wish it may so happen; but the direct meaning of the word there, is that, this commandment is true. For example, the first sentence is, "Curfed is the man
 "that maketh any carved or molten image
 "to worship it," to this the people answer amen. But they do not, by this re-

Indeed, as it is, any hearer at church may substitute this, instead of amen, if it is thought more charitable and fatisfactory to the mind. It is rather a matter of surprize that the seventy did not keep to *Amen* instead of *yevoito* but they are not followed by the Latin, which says not *fiat*, but *amen*, nor any modern translations I have seen. Wheatly speaks very significantly on this subject.

sponse,

sponse, with the curse of God to happen to any one, who maketh a carved or molten image; but amen implies no more, than that they acknowledge and believe that God has declared that every one who maketh and worshippeth a molten image, is liable to the curse of his Creator. The word is used in the same sense, at the end of the belief. Amen does not there signify, *so be it*, but is a mark of assent and belief; as much as to say, in one word, all this I believe. To mention one instance or two from the scriptures again.

ST. PAUL tells us, that all the promises are in God, yea and amen. What other meaning can you fix on that word, but that the promises of God are true and certain; without any notion of wishing? In like manner, when we answer amen to these sentences, we wish no evil either to ourselves or others; but only agree, assent, and
 acknow-

acknowledge that God hath declared his will to us in such a manner; and told us in scripture, that those who offend shall be liable to his curse or displeasure. Again, in the Book of the Revelations, "I am
 " alive faith the Lord for evermore. Amen." Amen certainly here means, it is true, it is certain, and what may be undoubtedly relied on, that God is alive evermore; it is not wished that he may live for evermore, but it is a declared truth that God will live for evermore. It is the very same in respect to our answers to these sentences; we do not wish that either we, our neighbours, or any other sinners, may incur the curse of God; but all we do is, we confess and allow with our own mouths, that God hath given such a declaration; our answer is amen; that is, I believe God hath declared to man such a sentence as the minister hath now read unto us.

AND

AND this I conclude, is what we all believe. I imagine every one here, was he to be asked whether he believes that God will punish the idolater, the undutiful child, the adulterer, and all those other crimes mentioned on that day; I say was any one to be asked whether he thinks God will finally punish all these offenders if they do not repent, his answer would be that he believes God will punish them if they do not repent. This indeed, if he believes the gospel, must be his answer; and this, certainly, is all that there is meant by amen. He does not wish that they may be punished, but only agrees that God has declared that he will punish all unrepenting sinners, and him amongst the rest, if he does not repent and turn to God in newness of life. Thus I have endeavoured to set this matter in the clearest light possible, and I hope intelligible to you all; that none of us may any longer have the least dread of in-

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curing the imputation of uncharitableness to our neighbours, or ill wishes to ourselves, by attending church on that day. I flatter myself that you are now convinced that no wishing or imprecation, is implied by amen in that place; but its right, true and proper meaning in that service is, that we firmly believe that God hath delivered to the world that declaration we then hear; and consequently, as we wish well to ourselves, we ought to do our diligence that we may not be in the number of the offenders. It is almost needless to make one observation, (though men inclined to evil will catch at the least glimpse and shadow of pretence to sin,) that by staying from church on this day, we in no wise alter the nature of God's commandments; they are firm and amen, that is, true and invariable; and being the will of God, surely it is right we should take every opportunity of knowing it, and this is the reason of this holy institution.

Moses

Moses appointed these sentences to be read as often as the children of Israel were collected together in one body; to remind them of their duty and the laws by which God governed them, and of the penalties and rewards annexed to the observance or neglect of them. The best of men are apt to go astray; and therefore it is necessary that some fixed time should be appointed for the business of reflection; to look back on our conduct, and call our ways to remembrance; to know our dependence on providence; and consequently, if we have been astray, to turn our feet back again to God's testimonies, and walk more readily in the way of his commandments. Christ's church, ever attentive to the salvation of men, has taken care not to omit so useful and necessary a step as this; and hath appointed the forty days preceeding our Saviour's passion, for this useful business; and has wisely begun this holy work by ordering on the

first day, God's will to be read to us as collected from the Old and New Testament; by which means we may be enabled the better to examine our actions, as we know what God expects from us, and in what we offend him. And this brings me, in the second place, to consider in what manner we ought to employ the ensuing lent.

AND first, we may observe, that this institution has been in the Christian Church from the earliest time, probably even so far back, as the life of St. John himself. The duration of it has a little varied; at one time, they used to make an absolute abstinence for forty hours, but afterwards reduced it to forty days, this being the number which God seemed to have made use of for any signal part of his work. He drowned the world in forty weeks; malefactors received forty stripes, as the punishment

ment of their iniquities; both Moses and Elias fasted forty days; the Ninevites were allowed this space for repentance; and even our Saviour himself fasted the same number of days. I do not mean from this, to place any virtue in a particular number; but as such a season is necessary, it was quite as proper to fix such a time for it as God had before allotted on the same occasions, and the like space of time as Christ, and many holy men in Scripture, had before set apart for this holy purpose. The time of year, is certainly, of all others, the most proper; being the season which leadeth us more particularly to the consideration of the great sufferings which Christ underwent for our redemption; the sufferings and rebukes, the indignities and hardships he suffered, even from the very people whom he came to save. What season could be more suitable than this, for us to consider our ways, and reflect in ourselves how

odious all sin and wickedness must be in the sight of God; who would not pardon us, even upon our repentance, but through the merits of a crucified Redeemer? The better to prepare our hearts and minds for this business of reflection, we are enjoined during this season, to keep our bodies in temperance and sobriety. The mind, whilst confined in this earthly tabernacle, must depend upon it; and therefore a debauched body will naturally deaden and stupify the mind, and render it unfit for the serious concerns of this season. Our church, therefore, strictly enjoins, during this time, an entire abstinence from all excesses whatever; that we are in no wise to study the pleasures or indulgences of the body; but only so preserve and nourish them, as they may be made subservient and useful to the services of the soul; that, if any thing, we ought to mortify them, that we may have some conception of the great hardships

hardships our Saviour suffered on our account. But do not imagine from this, that our food recommendeth us to God; or that virtue or vice, in any wise, dependeth on the nature of what we eat or drink. Many people chuse to feed on fish, as being a food of light digestion, and therefore less troublesome to the mind; but some constitutions can easily digest meat; and in that case, if we were to enter into a disquisition of the subject, I do not know but this would be judged a more proper food for a state of humiliation, than fish.

How ridiculous therefore is it, in the Church of Rome, to place so much virtue in the nature of our food; and to make our humiliation to consist, not in the quantity, but in the quality of what we eat. A man must have but a small share of common understanding, not to see at first sight, that it is very immaterial with what

kind of food a person makes himself a glutton. What difference can there possibly be, whether we debauch ourselves by overcharging our stomachs with fish, or with flesh, when certainly the effect on the mind must be the same?

WE are told, that the employment of this season should be the examination of our souls, a thorough search into our ways; and, as the psalmist observes, this is the time to “purify our hearts, even as silver is purified seven times in the fire.” Solomon tells us, “there is a season for every thing under the sun.” This therefore, is the season for thought and reflection; this is the time to correct all the errors of our souls, root out all inordinate desires and affections, and to implant into them the seeds of virtue and religion. Now is the proper time to purge the floor of our hearts; to kill every poisonous weed, and
cherish

cherish all good desires; that they may bring forth more abundantly that which is good and acceptable before God. This is the most likely opportunity of obtaining the remission of our sins from our Creator, as at this time Christ suffered for our redemption. But above all, we ought now to be very careful in the examination of all our proceedings; whether, in our conduct, we may not have contracted any regular crimes, and thereby become as it were habitual sinners? This is the most dangerous state we can possibly be in; and the most difficult of all others to subvert and overcome.

It will be best seen what I mean, by an example or two. The common sweater, for instance, may have so habituated himself to this unreasonable and inexcusable affront, and sin against God, as to have wore away the least sensibility of the heinousness

nousness and danger of this offence. This accustomed habit may, at the time, render the consequence of the crime less troublesome to the sinner; but in the end, the punishment will be the greater. God's anger will not be less severe, because we grow negligent in our duty, and sin as it were mechanically. To mention another instance, of no less consequence to ourselves; and that is, our attendance at church. The neglect of this most necessary and important duty, insensibly grows upon us; perhaps for the first Sunday or two, it may not sit so easy upon our consciences; and we may endeavour to sooth our minds with some excuse for our absence; but in a little time it grows into an habit, and we are as easy in our constant absence from God's public worship, as the swearer is in taking his name in vain; but you cannot be so sensibly wicked, as to imagine our sin becomes less, or will suffer a lighter

lighter punishment because we have made it habitual. And lastly, in regard to the Sacrament; when we first attend the church, we naturally see that this holy Sacrament is part of the service, and consequently, we cannot but ask ourselves, on our first absence, why we neglected that part of our duty? We then plead business and the want of time for repentance; or the great danger of taking it unworthily; this will serve for the first turn or two, and then it becomes an habit, and we think no more about it. But do you think this is a sufficient excuse, to refuse so loving an invitation? But however, this may be in some small degree, more excusable than the other two, who are certainly without excuse: as it proceeds from a real scrupulous, and tender conscience. But I would by no means, give the least encouragement to any one to be absent from the altar; for it is, of all institutions, the most conducive to our comfort

comfort and the likeliest time for repentance and forgiveness of our sins. Thus, my brethren, I have laid before you what seems to be our reasonable service for the ensuing lent ; to look thoroughly into our ways in general, and carefully correct any bad and evil habits in particular ; and if we do this, we cannot but be temperate in our lives and conversation. Fasting does not seem so much to be productive of thinking, as the consequence of thought. This Nehemiah tells us, he did not fast in order to think on his ways ; but whilst he was employed in reflecting on his past conduct, his attention was so taken up, that he forgot to eat his bread. To conclude ; above all, when we have thoroughly purged our hearts of all sin, and engrafted into them good desires, let us seriously consider the great necessity of the holy Sacrament, as the earnest of our unfeigned repentance, and determined resolution of spending our future days

days in God's service; which, as it will be our comfort here, so will it be the means of eternal glory hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father, and Holy-Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, and worship, world without end. Amen.

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S E R M O N IX.

O N A H A B.

I KINGS, 21 CHAP. 29 VERSE.

SEEST THOU HOW AHAB HUMBLETH HIMSELF
BEFORE ME? BECAUSE HE HUMBLETH HIM-
SELF BEFORE ME, I WILL NOT BRING THE
EVIL IN HIS DAYS: BUT IN HIS SON'S DAYS
WILL I BRING THE EVIL UPON HIS HOUSE.

THREE is not perhaps a text in Scrip-
ture which opens to us a larger field
of discourse, than the words now before
us; or a verse that has afforded a greater
confidence of infidelity and blasphemy, to

the wicked man ; whose interest it is to invalidate the Scriptures, for his present ease. And yet upon examination, there is not an instance more foreign to his purpose, or that more plainly tends to give us a proper notion of God and his attributes. The evil and wicked infidel here arraigns both the knowledge, the mercy, the immutability, and the justice of Almighty God, in this single account of Ahab and his family. God's knowledge is disputed, in that he discerned not the hypocrisy of Ahab's heart in his feigned humility ; his mercy is condemned, in deferring his punishment without knowing his repentance ; his immutability, in changing from his former determination ; and his justice, in punishing the son for the iniquity of his Father. " I will not, saith God, bring the evil in his days ; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house." The consideration of each of these particulars, with the

the reflections arising from them, I shall make the discourse of our present meeting; and then conclude with a short application to ourselves.

IN order the more clearly to understand this matter, we must refer back to a few particulars of Ahab's life. Now Ahab, on the death of his father Omri, was made King over that part of Israel which had revolted from Rehoboam Solomon's son, and came to Jeroboam the son of Nebat, whom you have so often mentioned to you in Scripture, as causing or leading Israel into sin. Now the character the Bible gives of this King is, That Jeroboam's sins were nothing or light in respect to him. He began his reign by marrying Jezebel, an idolater's daughter; and did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, by idolatry and sin, than all the King's of Israel which were before him; no won-

der then, that God was determined to punish such a wretch; to bring evil on such a lost and dissolute family as this. From the seventeenth, to this chapter, you read of many of his enormous iniquities, and his adoration of Baal and other false gods. The particular occasion of the words before us was, his oppression of a poor man; his unlawful murder of him, in order to possess himself of his vineyard; but yet had, like David's adultery, and murder of Uriah, contrived so as to escape the notice of man. But his heart was not concealed from God, no more than from himself; and God sends the prophet Elijah unto him, the same prophet who had before reprov'd him for the excessive wickedness of his doings. And here we have an instance of the great force of conscience. However men may hide and dissemble it, by a continual scene of infamy and profaneness; yet, when calamity, sickness, or any other warn-
ing

ing from heaven attacks them, they are immediately cast down and overwhelmed with self conviction; and though their heart is too far depraved to be mended, yet their dread of divine displeasure will throw them into the convulsive agitations of fear of that punishment, which they know is their just due from their offended God. Thus you find that Ahab had retired to the private enjoyment of his wickedly acquired possession, and thought himself secure from the knowledge of every one, but his own heart; yet as soon as he saw the prophet, he did not wait his speaking, but his own self-condemned heart immediately knew the business of his coming, and cried out, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?" The prophet replied, "I have found thee; because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." And then he lays before him, that he had now filled up the measure of

his iniquities, and tells him, that God had determined to make an end of him and his posterity.

How true is that proverb of Solomon, that “ the righteous are as bold as a lion; “ and that the wicked fail in all their proud “ boastings, when calamity comes upon them.” Accordingly Ahab is self-condemned, and sinks under the burden of his iniquity. When he heard these things, his soul was struck through, not with repentance, yet with dread and sorrow; “ He rent “ his clothes, and put sackcloth on his “ flesh, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, “ and walked with fear and trembling.” God, who is ever merciful, and desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent and live, deferred the intended punishment; in hopes, that he might return from the error of his way, and cleave to God with his whole heart; and

and immediately dispatched to Elijah the prophet, the words of my text; "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days will I bring this evil, which I have threatened upon his house." Now because Ahab's fears and sorrows were feigned, and only proceeded from the dread of impending punishment; some men arraign both the knowledge and ill-timed mercy of God: than which, nothing can be more wicked, or more ungrateful. There is no doubt, but God foresaw the hypocrisy of his heart; but then, as our Saviour saith, every man shall be judged out of his own mouth; and that mercy shall even triumph over justice; so was it here. God who is unwilling any should be lost, was mercifully pleased to try the sorrow of this man; for as sorrow is the first step to repentance and amendment, he, like an indulgent fa-

ther, spared the bewailing offender, in hopes of his reformation: that if he did perish, it might be owing not to the want of indulgence of God, but to his own wilfulness and stubborn depravity. An excellent writer gives us this improving turn to this part of holy writ; that as no vice is to go unpunished, so neither is any virtue to go unrewarded; therefore, as Ahab at least shewed an acknowledgement of sin, and the justice of its punishment, it was right to give it its due reward, which was the postponing of his punishment. And the reflection he draws from it is this: That we ought not to envy sinners, who may in this world seem to partake of the blessing of God; but to look upon them as calls to repentance and amendment, that if possible they may be reclaimed; and if they will not, they have already had the full reward of every tendency to virtue: The same as Abraham tells

tells the rich man in torments; "Thou
" hast received thy good things for any
" virtue thou canst plead." But in the
day of judgment, they will be amply re-
paid for their iniquities, without any hope
or expectation of mercy; and on the other
hand, when men endeavour to follow the
commandments of God, and yet suffer un-
der various calamities and afflictions; they
should consider them as the punishment of
their sins, that in the day of judgement,
there may be no calling to an account,
but that they may immediately, through
Christ, enter into the everlasting joys of
heaven. This certainly seems to be the
way of an unerring Providence; for though
he mercifully listened to the hypocritical
tears of this false penitent, who soon re-
turned to the infamy and wickedness of
his old ways; you read, in the following
chapter, that he came to a fearful end:
that "the dogs licked his blood, accord-

“ing to the word of the Lord, which he
“spoke.” Thus you see, neither the
knowledge nor mercy of God is impeached
in his deferring Ahab’s punishment;
but that both are eminently displayed, in
shewing mankind how unwilling our hea-
venly father is, that we should perish; and
at the same time shews us, that if we will
not turn, iniquity must be our ruin at the
last. Let us then now, in the second
place, consider the charge brought against
the immutability of God, in his changing
his purpose, after he had determined to
punish Ahab, in the total dissolution of
himself and his family.

Now, we must not imagine this is the
only instance of this kind, for we have many
more in the sacred writings; thus Abime-
lech and Hezekiah shall die, and yet they
shall not die; Nineveh shall be destroyed,
and yet Nineveh shall not be destroyed,

I will

I will bring evil upon Ahab's house, and yet I will not bring it. And certainly these expressions seem contradictory to those parts which say, that God's yea, is yea, and his nay is nay. But without taking you into the subtle and useless disputes of schoolmen, the case is undoubtedly this; that all these promises, and these threats, are given conditionally, as is most evidently clear from the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel; where God declares, "At what instance I shall speak, concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do unto them; and at what instance I shall speak, concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it; if it be to do evil in my sight, then will I repent of the good where-
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“ with I said I would benefit them.” Thus you find, that all the promises and the threats in Scripture, are conditional; nay, it is the same case, even in respect to the Gospel, that though Christ is set forth as suffering for the redemption of the whole world, yet you see it is upon condition that they repent, and that they leave off their evil ways, and return to God with full purpose of amendment and obedience; for Christ himself tells us, he will not plead the price of his redemption for those who continued in sin all their lives long; but will dismiss them with this saying, “ Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.” I think I need not use any more words, or time, to convince you of the propriety of God’s deferring the punishment of Ahab, and repenting of the evil he had determined against him; for you must see it was an act entirely consistent with the nature of God, and the government

ment of his creatures: It only shews to our great comfort, that however wrathfully God may seem displeased at us; yet on our humility, he will forbear and leave room for our repentance and amendment, if so be we will but turn; and that it is compulsion not pleasure, that leads him to the punishment of hardened and abandoned sinners. Let us then, now consider the last and most difficult objection; which is brought against the justice of God, in punishing the son for the iniquity of the father. “I will not, saith God, bring the evil in his days; but in his son’s days, will I bring the evil upon his house.” Now, from the foregoing consideration, it is an easy matter to properly understand this passage, did not every transaction of God in Scripture, prove it to be just and natural. The meaning of the passage is undoubtedly this: “Because Ahab humbleth himself before me, I
“ will

“ will not bring the evil in his days,” I will defer it for some time, to see if they will repent and amend: but if they will not repent and amend, but still go on in their idolatry and sin, I will contain no longer, but in the next generation, that is, in his son’s days, will I bring the evil upon his house. You see this renders the denunciation both natural and just, that for the humility of Ahab, the punishment of this idolatrous nation was deferred one reign; and then, if they did not repent, God was determined to be avenged on such an abandoned and idolatrous family. But behold here, the riches of God’s mercy! that though Ahab remitted nothing of his abominable iniquities, yet God spared the son, Ahaziah, his immediate successor, who followed the steps of his wicked father; and did not extirpate the family, till the abominable reign of Joram, who was killed by Jehu in the field of Naboth; who commanded

commanded the seventy sons of Ahab to be destroyed; and in the tenth of the second book, you read, "that he destroyed all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake to Elijah*." Hence then you learn, that when God is said to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, it is upon supposition that they do not re-

* But we must note here, that though the extirpation of Ahab's family was deferred until the third reign, when his son Joram's slain carcase was cast into the portion of the field of Naboth without burial, to be eaten of the fowls of the air; and the cursed Jezebel's blood licked up, and flesh eaten in the portion of Jezebel; yet neither Ahab, nor his son Ahaziah, died a natural death, but felt God's vengeance for their iniquity. Ahab was slain in battle at Ramoth Gilead: see the twenty-second Chapter of Kings: And Ahaziah came to an untimely end, by falling through a lattice in his upper chamber, in Samaria: see the second book of Kings, first chapter verse second, and Bishop Patrick's note.

pent, but follow the ways of their fathers, in doing that which is evil in the sight of the Lord. “ But if a wicked father begetteth a son, that seeth all his father’s sins, which he hath committed, and considereth, and doeth not the like, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; “ he shall surely live.” And the same may be said of the good father, who begetteth a wicked son. The meaning of the injunction in the second commandment appears to be this: That though God, in his merciful forbearance, may not punish a wicked father, yet let not a son trust to this; for if they will not repent, it will come heavy at the last, though deferred to the third or fourth generation. And, on the other hand, to encourage men to virtue and goodness, God promises that it will be an argument of his mercy and forbearance to a thousand generations: thus you read, that God spared the Israelites for Moses, when he would have destroyed them,

them, had not Moses stood in the gap; thus he promised Abraham to spare Sodom, if only five righteous persons could be found in it. And when men live evil and wicked lives, the sins of their forefathers, whom they imitated, are alledged as con-comitant arguments for their punishment; as being a continued race of wicked and abandoned sinners. Thus you read, in the 78th Psalm, where their forefathers are called a stubborn and faithless generation; but you will find it difficult to produce one single instance in scripture, where a son who studied virtue was punished for the vices of a wicked parent; and therefore, the whole meaning is, that wickedness unrepented of, will surely be punished, though the mercy and goodness of God may defer it for a generation or two; and that virtue will not only be a comfort to ourselves, but the means of God's blessing to our children. This surely, is argument enough for us to
live

live righteously ourselves, and give our children the same good advice, that they may tell their children; that God may bless us and our posterity in this world, as well as crown us with everlasting joys in the next.

Thus I have set before you this history, in a light I hope agreeable to our notions of an all-powerful, an all-merciful, immutable, and just God. The application is easy and natural; that it is God's determined resolution to punish vice; and though his mercy triumphs over his justice, though his indulgence slackens his indignation; and, as David observes, when his anger unfoldeth, he remembereth that we are but dust and ashes; yet, if we will not return from our evil ways, and renew our obedience; however so unwillingly, his justice must condemn us at the last to eternal misery. And above all, since Christ has
come

come down, and not only taught us the way to please God, by his precepts, and his own example, but died for the sins of our infirmity; what can we expect if we neglect so great salvation?

LET then, my brethren, these thoughts and these considerations stir up our wills and affections, that we may plentifully bring forth the fruit of good works, and thereby entail a blessing upon our children; and that, at length, we together with them, may be plentifully rewarded in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with the father, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, and worship, world without end. Amen.

[illegible]

S E R M O N . XIII.

BALAAM'S WISH.

NUMB. XXXiii. 10. LET ME DIE THE DEATH
THE RIGHTEOUS, AND LET MY LAST
END BE LIKE HIS.

HOWEVER vicious a man may have
been in his life and conversation,
whatever contempt he may have shewn both
to the laws of God and nature ; yet he must
necessarily wish to die the death of the
righteous, and to have his last end like
his;

his ; though his service has been in the vineyard of Satan, yet he can have no objection to receive the wages of the righteous from the hands of God. Whilst men are occupied in their evil pursuits, and taken up, and possessed as it were, with either the practice of vice, or the contemplation of blasphemous notions ; they have no time to think either on the danger of their own choice, or the advantage of religion. The present pleasures of iniquity, blind their minds on the one hand ; and pride and self-sufficiency of reason, darken their understandings on the other. Both the practical and speculative sinner, differ not at all in reality. The one is resolved not to practise the precepts of any system, and the other will not be convinced that there is any religion at all. They have also this further similarity, that they are the most ungrateful of all God's creatures. The one by shameful and wicked abuse
3 of

of the corporeal blessings of life, as health and riches; and the other in the prostitution of those mental faculties, which, in justice, should lead him to a more awful veneration of that God who bestowed them upon him. As they thus resemble each other in their rise and progress, neither are they divided in their end. Whenever either poverty or sickness overtakes the practical sinner, what an object of desolation and despair! His whole frame both in body and soul, is full of trembling; shame covers him with confusion, and the fear of judgment drives him to distraction: he consumes away in despair, and though he may wish to die the death of the righteous, and to have his last end, which is now drawing nigh, like his; yet does his strength fail, and the burden of his former neglect and disobedience, weighs him down with sorrow inexpressible; not to be done away till the separ-

ation of body and soul. The same it is with the speculative sinner. Whilst the vigour of his understanding puffs him up with notions almost of self-existence and all-sufficiency in himself, he is ready to reason out of the world the truth and obligation of religion, and even the existence of a God; but when feebleness comes upon him, and death stares him in the face, then all his speculative fancies fail him; his heart droops, and like Addison's Atheist, calls out "Lord be merciful unto me!" or, which is the same thing, he wishes to die the death of the righteous, and to have his last end like his. And this must be the case with men in every station and condition in life, when once they are brought to a serious consideration of their connections with God; that vice is his abhorrence, and virtue his full pleasure and delight, and that he will ever-

everlastingly punish the one and reward the other.

WHILST a man is considering on these things within himself, however frail and weak he may be either in his faith or resolution, he cannot avoid concluding the present meditation in the words of my text—
“ Let me die the death of the righteous,
“ and let my last end be like his.” Balaam the author of them, was as wicked as most men; and therefore, in my ensuing discourse, I shall in the first place, give you a brief account what it was which led him to this holy and fervent petition in the text; that he, who was so wicked a man, should on a sudden, even while he wished to do evil, desire to die the death of the righteous, and to have his last end like his; and then, secondly, draw from it some useful reflection by way of application to ourselves. In the

first place then, I am to give a brief account what it was which led to this holy and fervent petition in the text. The children of Israel, in their way from Egypt into the land of Canaan, had overcome many nations who had opposed their passage through their countries; and having on this account, utterly destroyed the kingdoms of the Amorites and Bashan, they marched to the borders of Moab, where Balak was king.

HE was resolved to oppose the progress of the Israelites; and in order to attempt it with greater certainty of success, he had a mind to obtain Balaam's enchantment, to curse them before he began. Balaam, as St. Peter observes in his second Epistle, loved the wages of unrighteousness; and the king agreeable to the policy of all nations when they would engage a wicked man to an evil purpose, endeavours to allure him

him with the bribe of costly presents.— But God we are told refused the prophet, and would not let him go; upon which the king imagining he was not refused on any religious motive, but that his gifts were not equal to the importance of his demand, attempted a second petition, with an assurance to Balaam that on his compliance, he should receive all the gratification his heart could desire. Upon this, he earnestly intreated God; who in his anger gave him leave; but when he came there, as he could prophecy nothing, but what was to come to pass, he was obliged, contrary to his own inclination, to pronounce blessings instead of curses to the children of Israel; to foretell their great future honour and glory; and utter destruction of all nations, who attempted to oppose their designs; and whilst he was prophesying these astonishing blessings to the children of Israel, and telling to the king that

that the reason of it was because they walked in the commandments of God, and did not pollute themselves with the sin of idolatry, as other nations, which he destroyed, had done; Balaam, I say, on this reflection of his own, on the ways of Providence, that God in the end, was always the promoter of those who followed after righteousness, and the destruction of the ungodly, and having now before him such striking instances of both, immediately broke out into the fervent ejaculation in the words before us; "O let me," saith he, "die the death of the " righteous, and let my last end be like " his." The words are thought by many, to be wrong translated; and ought to be rendered, " Let me die the death of the " righteous, and let my posterity be like " his." The original word will bear this sense; and it is certainly more agreeable to the subject than any other consideration.

Balaam

Balaam foresaw, by his prophetic spirit, that the children of Israel, as a reward for their serving the true God, and worshipping him in the manner that Moses had taught, that their posterity should be blessed; their name should continue for many generations, and that their Almighty Creator would safely convey them into that glorious land of Canaan, as he had promised their forefathers. On the other side, Balaam saw the impending destruction which hung over the heads of the idolatrous people; that their name would soon be put out, and their memorial perish from amongst men; and this by reason of their deserting the true God, and worshipping the carved images of their own hands, the fruits of a wicked and vain imagination, whose hearts had forsaken their true and eternal father, and were polluted with all the filthiness of heathen idolatry.

BALAAM

BALAAM, thus seeing that the prosperity and continuance of a kingdom, depended on their duty or disobedience toward God; and as God himself declares in his second commandment, that his blessing attends even the thousandth generation of them that love and keep his commandments; there is very little doubt, but that the prophet meant by wishing to die the death of the righteous, by that means to secure the blessing of Providence to his posterity, for many generations. This I say, is most probably the proper rendering the verse; from which, we may draw to ourselves in the first place, this most just and useful inference; that, if Balaam was so desirous of dying the death of the righteous, merely because God would prosper his posterity upon earth, which certainly could be to him no more than imaginary happiness; for when once we give up our breath, then all our thoughts
perish

perish, and the things of this life no more belong unto us:—If therefore, I say, Balaam could offer this holy and ardent petition, merely on account of the happiness of those whom he left behind, who like him must also die, and soon put an end to their earthly existence; with how much greater earnestness and sincerity, ought we to ask of our Creator to give us so much of his heavenly assistance, whereby we may be enabled to die the death of the righteous, and to have our last end like his? The Prophet's plan ended in this world, and his reward was not to him, but to his children. But it is not so with Christians. Our eternity depends upon it. Everlasting death, or everlasting life will be the consequence of our behaviour here. I believe that God, even in the christian covenant, extends his blessing upon the children of those fathers, who have obeyed him in sincerity; and that the posterity

ty of the wicked may come to a fearful end even in this world. This I believe is true; but then, our leaving this life in a state of virtue or vice, has also a further view. We are to give an account of the works done in our body, before the throne of our Almighty Creator. The son of God is our judge. The precepts he has given in the gospel, are to be the rule of our actions, by which we shall stand or fall; and those of us who have been wise enough, and such well-wishers to ourselves, as to have believed that our gospel was delivered by the son of God, and have as far as human nature permits, fashioned our lives agreeable to its injunction, such will be accosted by our Saviour in those heavenly words; "Come ye blessed children of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" but to the unbelieving and wicked souls, he will say, "depart from

“ from me ye workers of iniquity, into
“ eternal punishment.” You see, from
these words, how much more a matter of
weight and concern it is to us, than it was to
Balaam, that we should be desirous of dy-
ing the death of the righteous, and having
our last end like his !

2dly, We may learn from this part of
sacred history, that we ought not to tempt
God ; or, which is much the same thing,
we ought not to tempt our own consci-
ences. Had Balaam listened to the voice
of God, which on his first address to God,
said unto him, “ Thou shalt not go and
“ curse these people at all, for they are
“ blessed,” he would have avoided the
anger of his Creator. But covetousness of
money and honour, blinded his judgment ;
and though God had told him if he did
go, it would in the end turn out to his
disadvantage, yet he obstinately persisted
in

in his foolish chimera of happiness and gain; and when too late, he found his labour lost; for as his prophecy was not agreeable to the king, he dismisses him in his anger with disgrace, without any reward at all: and thus it is, in all other instances amongst men, when they deviate from the way of righteousness, contrary to the unbiaſſed dictates of our minds! Our consciences are to us, what God was to Balaam. Our consciences report to us the truth, fairly and impartially; and when a man endeavours to act contrary to its judgment, it shews that his heart is evil inclined, and he wants only some plausible plea to do evil. It is the advice of a heathen moralist, but nevertheless worthy the practice of the best of christians, "Not to do any thing, the justice of which we doubt of;" and the reason he gives for it is, that "virtue, truth and justice, are of so plain and simple a nature, that

that they must appear at first sight; and consequently, when we doubt, it must be owing to some mixture of evil in the object of our attention. This was the advice of one who had not the advantage of the christian doctrine for his information; and therefore, as St. Paul saith, "These people
" were a law to themselves. How inexcusable therefore, must we be, if we suffer ourselves to be seduced by the wiles of Satan, to offend against our consciences; when we have the sure word of God for the strengthening and confirming us in every good work, and for the assuring us of the inevitable destruction, which must, at last, be the fate of the unrighteous and wicked man?—Our evil intentions,

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folly

folly, and imminent danger of suffering ourselves to be drawn from our duty on the highest consideration possible, not even if we could gain the world. For where, in the end, can be the profit? For by acting wickedly, we shall certainly lose our own soul to all eternity. Wicked men may sometimes prosper here for a few years, and seem more blessed than the righteous: but let not this shake our faith or slacken our diligence in the practice of virtue; for the end of the ungodly is, that they shall perish, and the righteous alone shall be had in everlasting remembrance through Jesus Christ our Lord.

BUT 3dly. Some one may here ask, how it is consistent with the nature of God's love to virtue, and his hatred to vice, to bless so wicked a man as Balaam with the gift of prophecy? The proper answer to this would be, that the ways of Providence

vidence are unfearchable by us; and it is enough for us to know, that he will finally shew us his great and eternal aversion to sin, by punishing the committers of it with never ending torment; and his affection for virtue, by rewarding good men with everlasting happiness. This is the manner we ought to reason, in regard to God's dispensation in the present scene of things, in matters which appear above out reason, and incompatible with our present notions of things.

BUT in the case before us, there is not any difficulty. St. Paul tells us, that God giveth to men divers gifts, as seemeth best in his own eyes; to one, the gift of prophecy; to another, the gift of tongues; but whether men make a proper use of these, is to themselves; these are talents given by our Creator, and for which we are accountable before God. We

may as well wonder when we see a man act even below the dignity of the brute creation, that God could ever endue such a wretch with the blessing of reason. Do not we see every day, instances of people of the most refined understanding, men who cannot, from their education, but know the nature of their station, and their duty both towards God and man, and the consequence of their disobedience ; I say, do we not daily see such people act in direct opposition to the real sentiments of their own minds ? And though they know these things, they perversely will do them ; and are therefore, like Balaam, the more inexcusable ; for to them who know the will of God and do it not, there remaineth an heavier weight of punishment, which will be their portion at the day of judgment.

THE last observation I shall make from the history before us is, that it is to no purpose to wish to die the death of the righteous, and to have our last end like his, unless we have imitated the righteous man in the practice of holiness and virtue of living. Balaam, you hear in the words of the text, most ardently petitions for this blessing; but it was not granted him, for we read in the 31st chapter of numbers, that he came to an untimely end, and was killed by the Israelites; and no more mention is made of him or his posterity. It is certainly not any virtue, to wish to be a good man, and receive the rewards of virtue. It shews indeed, that virtue is of so amiable and engaging a nature, that we must commend though we do not imitate its votaries. It is therefore, an instance of the great intrinsic value of virtue; which, as a heathen writer observes, it could be seen with the

“ naked eye, it must excite the admiration
“ of all men.” But the commendation of
virtue, is no more a real virtue to a
wicked man, than pitying a distracted fel-
low-creature, would be charity in one able
to relieve him. But to bring the matter
nearer to ourselves as Christians; I make
not the least doubt, but every one of us
wishes to die as becometh a disciple of
Christ, and thereby become entitled to the
rewards of eternal life; but we cannot be
such bad reasoners, or such deceivers of
ourselves, as to look upon this as any
virtue in us. Nay, to carry it still higher,
I suppose that all of us here are christians;
that is, we believe our Saviour to be the
real son of God. But what advantage is
all this to us? For my own part, I can
scarce see how a man who reads the gos-
pel, with impartiality and diligence, can
avoid believing in the son of God.
But whence the advantage, if we observe
not

not the rules he hath laid down as the condition of profiting by his blood ? We, like Balaam, who wished to die the death of the righteous, we may wish to die the death of the christian, and to have our last end like his ; but it will be to no purpose ; but like Balaam we shall find destruction at the last, unless we who call and profess ourselves christians, hold that faith in purity and holiness of life. Let our conduct be agreeable to the precepts of the gospel, and then we cannot be too stedfast in our faith ; let us but lead good and virtuous lives, and then take every opportunity of testifying our faith in, and reliance on Jesus Christ as our mediator ; particularly at his own holy institution at the altar. In short, we must, as St. Peter enjoins us, add to our faith virtue ; to virtue, knowledge ; to knowledge temperance ; and, to express the Apostle's

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mean,

meaning in one word, we must adorn our profession with all purity and holiness of living. Our good works must confirm our faith; and our faith, render our good works acceptable to God. Our continual care and watching, must guard against the temptation of sin; and our faith, plead for the unavoidable infirmities of our fallen nature. In a word, we must, as far as in us lies, please God in all our actions, and flee from sin and Satan; thus, and thus only, by endeavouring after virtue, and striving against vice, shall we be able to live the life of the good and righteous man; and consequently to obtain Balaam's wish, to die the death of the righteous, and to have our last end like his; most probably, by the happiness of our posterity in this world; but most certainly in the next, we shall find a crown of eternal happiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord, To whom,

whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost,
be all honour, glory and worship, world
without end. Amen.

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S E R M O N XII,

ON CONTENTMENT AND RESIG-
NATION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

PSALM xlii. VERSE 14.

WHY ART THOU SO VEXED O MY SOUL:
AND WHY ART THOU SO DISQUIETED
WITHIN ME?

HAPPINESS is the grand pursuit of all
the world; every one is desirous of
being happy, and all of us complain of
the want of it. However easily we may
allow ourselves to have been so in any sta-
tion which is past, we are feldom so in-
genuous

genuous to ourselves, or so grateful to our God, as to acknowledge it in the present stage. Ask the rising youth, and he will tell you that blessing alone is to be found in the busy, noisy scenes of life; and when he comes there, you are informed, that he looks for no solid and substantial felicity till the serene and calm retirements of old age; and if they arrive at that period, they either stamp Solomon's vexation of spirit upon the whole, or else confess that they have lost it in the former stages. But with those with whom we are more intimately acquainted, and dare to enter into the recesses of their bosoms, and inquire into the particulars of their unhappiness, most of us are obliged to have recourse to the words of my text, "Why art thou so vexed O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me?" For we too frequently perplex ourselves with we know not what, and are uneasy we know not why.

why. But as it is a matter of the highest moment, both to our present and future welfare, we cannot think our time mispent in endeavouring to find out the cause of this disease, and then if possible to obtain a cure for it. The readiest way to give an answer to the first part will be, by inquiring what led the Royal Author of my text into this serious expostulation with his soul, to know why it was so vexed, and why it was so disquieted within him? We may very justly remark, that there never existed a man, either read of in sacred or profane history, that experienced more the vicissitudes of fortune than the holy Psalmist. Job indeed, was brought down from a palace of glory and splendour, to the very sink of misery and disgrace; but then the scene was not continually changing; when God once gave leave to Satan to assault and prove this good man, he steadily persisted in it, till the Almighty turned
again

again at the last, was gracious unto his servant, and plenteously rewarded his righteous dealings.

BUT this was not the case with David; one while he lived in the highest prosperity, treading down his enemies before him, and made them also to flee who hated him; another time he became the scorn and derision of the whole world; his enemies pressed him in on every side like water, and they that hated him were Lords over him. At one time he seemed to be the peculiar object of heaven. God showered down his blessings upon him, in so visible and astonishing a manner, that it was wonderful in the sight of men; that his enemies who saw it were suddenly cast down and amazed, for they perceived that it was God's doing. Another moment, you would think him singled out by the Almighty, to pour down on him the vials of his wrath and indignation for the

the fins of the whole world. Thus you see his whole life truly checquered with prosperity and adversity; and may be justly said never to have continued in one stay. Those who proceed in the same unvaried path, in which nature first fixed them from the womb, may very easily pass through life whatever state it is; at least, I am sure, it does not signify so much as the world imagines, whether we are to act the part of a peasant, or of a king. Our ideas are naturally formed for the station we are in; and was it not for envy against those, who being once our equals rise above us, we should easily make our way to heaven in any state of life. But where our post is continually varying, and we must one while act the rich and powerful person, and at another the indigent and mean one;—this requires the strongest exertion of the soul, and tries the man: Hence reflection must closely occupy the faculties of the mind, both in prosperity

rich and adversity. Ingratitude indeed, does too often shut the mouth of the rich, that they may forget the author of them; but in adversity we all complain and pour out our cries to God.

HOWEVER, we must do David the justice to allow, that the Book of Psalms no less abounds with the most pathetic and ardent ejaculations of praise and thanksgivings for God's benefits bestowed upon him, than his complaints and mournings for the severities of his judgments. These two points of God's benevolence and justice chiefly make up the Book of Psalms; which are very wisely ordained to be publicly read in our church; as most of them abound with such pious reflections arising from God's dealings with his creatures, that every Christian, in any state, may draw from them many suitable applications to himself. Some few are almost wholly historical, and therefore do

do not appear, at first view, to be so very beneficial and necessary; but as they are but few in number, and even in them are found some verses which cannot but have a godly effect on the audience: Our church, for this, and other wise reasons, hath appointed the whole to be read, as abounding with many precepts and reflections tending to a pious and religious improvement of our lives and conversations. The particular occasion of the Psalm before us, was one of the greatest trials of human nature. A son, whom David had brought up with the greatest love and tenderness; who, as we afterwards were convinced, was dearer to him than life itself: This son, instead of the natural return of dutifulness and obedience, declared open rebellion against the father; and drove him from his habitation in Sion, where he used to worship.

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DAVID'S

DAVID's reflection, on this occasion, overwhelmed him with sorrow and dejection of heart; when he called to mind how often he had attended the house of God with a chearful mind; with the voice, as he expresseth it himself, of joy and praise, like those who attend any festival, or keep holiday. David was, on this, entirely cast down; his soul panted after God's seat, even as the thirsty hart after the water brooks. He could not but find himself, on a sudden, in the deepest pit of dejection; and for a moment, looked upon himself as one forgotten of God as well as man. But you find he soon recollects himself, and addresses his soul with inquiring after the reason of this unusual despondence, and mistrust in God. "Why art thou so vexed
 " O my soul, and why art thou so disqui-
 " eted within me? Hope thou but in God;
 " for I will yet praise him, who is the
 " help of my countenance and my God."

Though

Though I have been driven from place to place, from Hermon to Tabor ; though misfortunes overwhelmed me like the billows of the sea, and all the storms of adversity attacked me, yet in due time, God was my helper and defender. So long as I have yet lived in the world, I have ever had reason to bless the Lord, and to address myself to him as the God of my life. Formerly, saith the Prophet, “ I used to say unto
“ him in my calamities, my rock why hast
“ thou forsaken me ; why go I mourning
“ because of the oppression of the enemy ?
“ and therefore why art thou now so de-
“ pressed, for I will yet praise him ; and
“ then I doubt not but he will prove the
“ health of my countenance and my God.”

Thus you have the immediate occasion of the Psalm ; and the manner, you find, in which he brought on him this uneasiness, was his suffering this one misfortune to occupy his whole soul ; not allowing any of God's

former kindnesſes to ariſe in his breaſt to ſooth his preſent trouble, nor by looking forward towards his future mercies, to afford him ſpirits and hope that he ſhould ſoon change his preſent weeping into joy. And this is the caſe with all the world; as ſoon as any diſaſter overtakes us in life, it immediately drives from our thoughts the comforts and bleſſings we have enjoyed for many years. We give up ourſelves to deſpair and cōplaint, and do often times, by this means, make the moſt trivial incident a real grief and miſfortune. We vainly expect every thing to run ſmoothly on our ſide; and though we can look upon the miſfortunes and diſtreſſes of our neighbours with the compoſure of a real philoſopher, conſidering them but the natural and unavoidable lot of human nature in this fluctuating ſtate; yet, when it becomes our own caſe, we complain and cry aloud that our afflictions are too heavy to bear,
and

and that we are tried above what we are able to sustain. This, I believe, a man of but small observation will allow to be the real case with the greater part of mankind; who thus, for want of real evils, swell up imaginary ones, to render their life a burden to them; otherwise they would recollect themselves with the psalmist, and raise their soul out of that foolish lethargy of despair; and they then, like him, would find reason to say to their soul, “ I will yet
 “ trust in God, for in the end I shall find
 “ him my health and salvation.” “ Put thy
 “ trust, saith David, in God, for he is the
 “ health of my countenance and my God.”

FROM this examination of the words before us, we discover both the cause of, and remedy of this turn of mind: This unhappy inclination of creating uneasiness for ourselves. It arises, you hear, from letting every little incident take too great hold

of us ; and shut out the remembrance of all former, and present, much more valuable and important blessings. If by the natural course of things we lose a friend, or suffer any loss in our fortunes, we immediately give all over for lost, and look upon ourselves as forgotten and abandoned ; when perhaps, on reflection, we might have reason, in the one case, to bless God for continuing our friend so long with us, before he paid the natural and unavoidable debt of nature ; and as to a loss in our fortunes, upon giving time to think, we very likely might see it owing to some carelessness and negligence in ourselves ; or that the loss is not any ways comparable to the good we may have before, as unexpectedly, received at the hands of God.—But if neither of these is the case, we ought to remember that this is not our resting place ; but only intended for a trial of our souls ; and, for that intent, God has chequered the world with

with good and evil, prosperity and adversity; to try the sons of men, that he may make them zealous of good works, and thoroughly proved in all virtue and religion; and how can this be done, or seen, whilst in uninterrupted prosperity? This was the reason, the author of my text gave, for men being wicked in his days, that “they came into no misfortunes like
“other folk, neither were plagued like
“other men!” they did what they pleased and left their substance to their babes. For a while, this staggered David; but on reflexion, he found it was for their destruction, for at last he was convinced those wicked ones came to a fearful end. When God had suffered them, as long as he thought proper, to proceed in their evil ways, he sends to them the summons of death; and this awakes in their consciences, all their former ways, and forms in their minds if possible racks and torments, more terrible than those of hell itself. David,

when thoroughly convinced of this, thanks God, very frequently, for being in trouble; in one place, he confesses, that he had been going wrong, before God had called him to reflection; but this again set him right, and shews God was his trust, whom he ought to love and obey: "Before I was troubled, says he, I went wrong; but now do I keep thy law."

God is so unfearchable in his ways, that we can by no means, have any conception, in what manner he connects incidents together; and therefore, let our misfortunes be ever so great and desperate, yet we may reasonably rest satisfied, that the Lord will deliver us out of all, if we will but put our trust in him; that is, if God, sees that it is expedient for us. We poor short sighted mortals, are but ill judges of what is best for us; and frequently pray to have reverted what we, but a day before, asked

ed with the most earnest intreaties. We have here, in the psalm before us, a most convincing proof of it.

DAVID, you see, in the text, very greatly laments the hardship of his case, that his son Absalom had rebelled against him, and endeavoured his overthrow. And truly it is a most shocking reflexion! I scarce know any crime so black and heinous, as the undutifulness of children; who ungratefully forget the hand which reared them; and wickedly bring down the grey hairs of the parent, with sorrow, to the grave. But mark now how wavering and capricious we are in our desires! God you know, blessed David in his undertaking, and support of his kingdom; his son's army is overthrown, and Absalom himself killed in battle. Ought he not now to rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation, who delivered him from the
unnatural

unnatural rebellion of an ungracious son? This seems what might be expected; but what do we read in the Scripture? that the day which was attended with this wish-
 ed for success, was turned into mourning. And what said David unto his God, for giving him the liberty of again going and worshipping at Jerufalem? Why he went unto his chamber over the gate and wept; and, as he went, thus, he said—" O my
 " son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom,
 " would God I had died for thee, O Ab-
 " salom, my son, my son!" Thus you see, all this grief and concern, these hardships and complaints he poured out to God ended, when the Almighty had granted his deliverance (instead of thanking God) in declaring that he had much rather have died himself than his son, the ringleader of the whole disturbance; and who probably would, had he been preserved, have been continually molesting the peace of his govern-

government. Since then, we so little know what will be conducive to our happiness, and what will not: and as God knoweth all things, and from his very nature, as being a perfect and good Being, cannot with unhappiness to any creature, but contrary-wise felicity to every child of man; how then, are we to secure our peace and tranquillity in this world? even by ruling ourselves after God's word; by submitting entirely to his holy will and pleasure, and studying to please him all the days of our life. If we thus prudently and wisely guide our feet in the path of religion and virtue, we need not fear, but at length it will lead to peace at the last, which shall be eternal in the heavens. If misfortunes, at any time, break in upon our schemes of earthly happiness, let us be dumb and open not our mouths; as it is God's doing, who cannot but act for our good, and hath declared by his Son, that

for the few and trifling sufferings of this life, there are laid up for those that bear them patiently, and with a becoming resolution and courage, a crown of uninterrupted happiness and glory to all eternity.

To conclude, let us always remember, that whether in prosperity or adversity, in sickness or in health, high or low, rich or poor, we are the Lord's. God is not won by the glittering titles of the great, or moved by the obscurity of poverty, to bestow his favours; but in every nation, and in all stations, if we expect his loving-kindness, we must observe his laws; and then shall we be accepted of him. Let us keep but our innocence, and fashion our lives agreeable to the rules of the Gospel, and then we are sure of everlasting happiness in the world to come; and in this present life, that station will be allotted, as

God thinks best, and most likely to fit us for heaven.

LASTLY, let us but observe God's laws; and then in our petition follow the rule of the Greek philosopher, who thus addresses his God, "O God, of thy mercy, give me those things which are needful for me, though through ignorance and blindness I do not pray for them; and avert what may be hurtful to me, though I do pray for it." In short, it becomes us, if we would be as easy as can be in this world, and secure perfect happiness in the next, to resign ourselves wholly to the will of our Creator; and offer all our prayers, wishes, and petitions to him, in that most excellent form with which our Church ends the liturgy. To ask of God to fulfil all our desires and petitions, so far as may be most expedient for us; to grant us in this world, knowledge of his truth, and in the

270 CONTENTMENT AND RESIGNATION

the world to come life everlasting ; through
Jefus Christ our Lord, to whom with the
Father, and Holy-Ghoft, be afcribed all
honour, glory, and worship, world with-
out end. Amen.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X I V .

ON THE INSTABILITY OF HUMAN
AFFAIRS; AND THE MEANING
OF AN APPOINTED TIME FOR
MEN UPON EARTH CONSIDERED.

JOB, CHAP. XIV. VERSE 14.

IF A MAN DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN; ALL
THE DAYS OF MY APPOINTED TIME, WILL I
WAIT TILL MY CHANGE.

THE history of Job is a part of Scrip-
ture known to every one who has
given the least attention to the holy writ-
ings: That he was a person very exact in
his

his religious service towards God, and endeavoured to instil the same good principles amongst his children and household, that they also should walk in the fear of the Lord, and direct their ways according to the laws of the Most High.

SUCH a man as this, you will naturally say, had reason to expect the blessings of Providence, and to enjoy in return for his obedience and zeal towards God, the good things of this world; that his ways ought to have been ways of pleasantness, and all his paths peace. And this, we are told, was the happy effect of his uprightness; and in general it is so with all men. We read that his income was not only easy, but opulent, and his family a blessing unto him; for it was not only large, but a sufficiency for all of them; so that they

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were each one able his day* to feast his brethren; and this shews us that Job had this further happiness attending him, that he saw his children live together in all brotherly love and tenderness; but lest his children, through carelessness and inattention, should have been forgetful of God in the midst of their joy, his custom was always the following day to sacrifice to God on their account; so that as far as in him lay, no sin might cleave either to him or his family against God. Thus Job did continually. But Satan, that worst and most miserable of beings, who amongst other torments suffers that heavy one of perpetual envy at the happiness of others, soon darted his eye of jealousy upon this good and happy man; and the black subtlety of his heart as soon discovered a plan

* Grotius, and some others, would have each day to mean their native or birth-day; thus Matthew xiv. and Mark vi. speaking of Herod's birth-day.

to trouble and molest him ; and this you read he did, by arguing with God, that Job's religion was wholly selfish and mercenary, that he served God only as his mammon ; and this he would plainly see, by divesting him of the good things he then possessed. God, who knew his servant, and the integrity of his heart, suffered Satan to endeavour to alienate, in every method he chose, except the destroying him, his duty from God his Creator. This was a point our great adversary wanted, and which he certainly fulfilled with all the exactness of horror and cruelty, which his wicked heart could suggest to torment him with ; and not content with that, he gained over to his assistance, Job's most natural comforter in his distress ; she who ought to have soothed his cares and alleviated his sorrows, was by the instigation of that wicked one, brought over to advise her husband to " curse God and die.

THE other chapters preceding my text, contain the history of Job in his prosperity, and the effects which God's visitation had upon him; matters full of instruction to all mankind, in all stations and conditions in life. And the first thing observable is, that the heart of man is unsearchable and his ways past finding out. His mouth may speak smooth things, but for the same reason only as the fowler playeth to the unwary bird, that he may decoy him into the net which he hath prepared. Hatred and ill will are too frequently coloured over by friendship, with the same view that the hook is covered with something pleasing to the palate of the fish we would entrap. Whilst in ease and prosperity, we need never fear friends; and such perhaps, with all our penetration we cannot see through; who keep themselves so fair and engaging, that like Brutus, they will not be known, till the very time we stand in need of

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their assistance. At the instant Cæsar was looking for his friend Brutus, to assist him, he received a mortal wound from his treacherous hand.

Thus Job, whilst he was the greatest man in the East, had the attendance and kindness of all men; but as soon as God suffered him to be tried of satan, their friendship ended; adversity, as if touched by the rod of Aaron, turned their pretended good-will into real hatred; it pulled off the false cloathing of the sheep, and discovered the wolf in its proper colours. They, who before had thought him the best and most religious of princes, now altered their note, and seemed no way surprized that God should visit so bad a man with afflictions. “Remember, saith one of them who ever perished being innocent; or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow
“ iniquity

“ iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the
“ same. By the blast of God they perish,
“ and by the breath of his nostrils are
“ they consumed.” Now this reasoning is
in itself very just; the natural fruit of sin
and wickedness, is God’s visitation, either
of our bodies or minds. Sometimes the
wicked is brought to distress by sickness
and poverty; at other times he is, in the
midst of plenty, tormented with an evil
conscience, which continually gnaws upon
him, and breaks into every part of his
life. This is, I believe, the general course
even in this life; but not an invariable rule.
Sometimes we see the wicked man to re-
joice in the most valuable things in this
life, and to feel no seeming remorse at the
iniquity of his ways; and on the other
hand, the poor good man labouring under
all the hardships of poverty and distress;
and, what is worse, perhaps like Job, they
have been brought down from the highest

pinnacle of earthly glory, to the very sink of horror and despair: and yet no man has been able to lay any particular sin to their charge. Since this we find is, sometimes, God's method of dealing with his creatures, and no doubt for wise and good reason, it ill becomes any to judge of another's calamity. "Judge not, saith our Saviour, that ye may not be judged;" but let every one in this respect, stand or fall by himself, when he appeareth before God. You see these false friends of Job were certainly mistaken; for it was not Job's sins which brought on him these calamities; but they were sent as trials of his virtue, and manifestations of his purity of heart before God.

HAVING thus considered Job's state before his fall, and the behaviour of his friends on his afflictions; let us now take a view

view of the manner in which he himself behaved, when they came upon him.

AND first, we may observe, that Job's calamities were of two kinds; the one those of the mind; and the other of the body. Those of the mind were first inflicted on him, as the loss of his estate and children; a stroke truly shocking, and severe enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble; and if conscious of its own integrity, to cry out, then have I cleansed my heart in vain. But the holy author of my text received it with a truly noble resignation to the will of God; and, instead of murmurs and complaints, he prepared himself for worship and adoration; and addressed his God, in that noble ejaculation, "Naked came
" I out of my mother's womb, and naked
" shall I return thither: The Lord gave,
" and the Lord hath taken away: blessed
" be the name of the Lord." In all this

first trial therefore, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. This you learn, he withstood by a serious and godly reflection, by considering that every thing he possessed, was but lent of God, on condition of his receiving it again whenever he thought proper. To lose our estates by rapine, or any other kind of destruction, or our children or friends by sudden and unexpected events, are very critical trials in life, and require the strongest exertion of our faith and reason, and happy are they who are not put upon the experience.

No doubt but this loss was a severe hearing to Job, and called forth every yearning of nature; for to talk like some of the heathen philosophers, that we ought to look upon the loss of our friends and relations with the same indifference as the breaking of an earthen vessel, is talking much more like fools than like philosophers

fophers. No man (and Job also was one of like infirmities with ourselves) could hear of such an amazingly severe stroke of fortune, without the greatest shock of nature; but then, like Job, we must remember to call in the aid of religion and the ways of Providence, to keep us in proper bounds, that we do not charge God foolishly, nor speak unadvisedly with our lips in our trouble. This I take to be Job's behaviour in his first trial, which was truly becoming the good man, and would do honour to the most zealous Christian.

THE other scrutiny which Job underwent, was that of the body. Pain and anguish so took hold of him, that there was not one whole part in his body; upon this we find he could not any longer refrain from speaking; and in the severity of his pain he sometimes spoke unadvisedly with his lips; but then you find from
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the very first respite from pain, he immediately acknowledged his faults, and at one time even repented in dust and ashes. Reason and religion may still compose our minds, but the pains of the body will cry aloud. Men, in their cool and retired hour, in their meditation of ease and peace, may tell you that pain is no evil, and foreign to a man of virtue; but they have ever been unable to stand the test. Undoubtedly, to reflect on God, to have him always before us, to consider his former mercies and his future promises, are great supporters in our afflictions, and highly conducive to our weathering out a storm of adversity; but still pain will be heard, and sometimes will, by its violence, drown and overwhelm every other thought. But the greatest relief to those under these unhappy circumstances is, that they can be but for an appointed time, when a change will come; when those who patiently bear their

their

their lot here, will find it hereafter changed for a crown of eternal glory. This was Job's best remedy, and the only reviving cordial he could administer to himself. * "If a man (saith he, in the words of my text) die, he shall live again; all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." From these words therefore, let us then, by way of application, briefly consider, first, what is meant by an appointed time; secondly, what we are to understand by a change; and this will lead us, lastly, to consider the necessity of imitating Job in

* Dr. Wall justly observes, that in the Septuagint, this verse ends with "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee:" which words are the beginning of our 15 verse. His whole note is worth inserting.

"For if a man die he shall live to finish the days of his life. I will wait till I am made anew, *ως παλιγγενειας*.
"Then thou shalt call, and I will answer thee."

waiting

waiting for this change, and when we may be said to do it. First then, to consider what is meant by an appointed time.

WE must not consider this expression as meaning that there is a fixed time for our death, to which we must arrive, before we die; this is by no means the explanation; what we are to understand by it is, that we are all mortal; and though health and strength may be our happy lot, and we may have the good fortune to live clear of the numberless accidents which surround us, yet we must at length fall a victim to death. Our bodies are, in their own nature, frail and perishable. As we are born weak, feeble, and helpless, and gradually arrive to our full force and vigour; in like manner do we decrease in our strength; and by degrees our organs are worn out, and our powers and faculties fail; and then we naturally fall into death, like the
weary

weary traveller into the hands of sleep. David you find, fixes this time to three-score years and ten; and some he saith, may reach four-score years; but then their strength is but labour and sorrow.

THIS, we are taught, is the bound we cannot pass, at least but a few years: of which, we have not one instance in a million. And what is this, in respect to eternity? not so much as a single particle of earth, to all the matter of the whole globe.

AND therefore, Job was resolved to wait his change, even though it should be deferred to the very appointed time which human nature cannot pass.

How vain therefore, are the delusions of men who suffer their whole thoughts and minds to be engrossed after this momentary world;

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and attend not to the concerns of that life, whose years cannot be numbered, and whose days are without end!

Our folly would be great and inexcusable, was this the case, that we were to live to the appointed time; to the uttermost summit of human existence; but how much more daring and culpable is our infatuation after this world, and our anxieties and impatience about its concerns, when we do not know but one day, nay one moment, may close the scene, and usher us into eternity!

It is true, we cannot pass the appointed time; but thousands and ten thousands die before they reach that goal. Who can number the instruments of death, or where can we flee from his presence? Or what age or condition is invulnerable from his darts? Does he not shoot forth his arrows promiscuously amongst all ages, states and conditions?

tions? If we go into the palaces of Kings, he is there; and if we descend into the cottage of the poor man, he is there also. Could we take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost part of the sea, even there also shall we find him, for he never departeth from us. As he therefore, indiscriminately selects us out of the world, in all stages, and conditions; in infancy, and youth, in maturity and old age, in prosperity and adversity; who can tell when his turn is, whether he will not be the next, death will call on; and therefore, nothing can imply greater folly, than to put off all thoughts and preparation for death, upon account of our health, strength and condition; thence forming vain and improbable hopes, that we shall reach the appointed time; since it may safely be asserted the highest improbability possible is against any one person, that he reaches this appointed time, when nature is ex-
hausted

hausted and his change must come. Let us now consider what this change is; and that we may do in very few words; it is the very contrary (I mean to good men) to what this world is. Here we are liable to misfortunes, to sickness, and losses, to disappointments, to injuries from false friends or professed enemies; certain of nothing; hoping for shadows, and ardently wishing for what perhaps turns out our greatest evil; and though we may rejoice in some things, yet they are transitory, and they must soon leave us, or we them. Now, our state in the world to come is the reverse of this. There we shall rest from all our sorrows, and inquietudes. We shall put a final end to every anxiety, and begin a life of uninterrupted joy and pleasure.

This is the change which will happen to good men. But with the ungodly, it will not be so, they will find a bit-

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ter change; as they loved not righteousness, its reward will be far from them; as their delight was in sin, its punishment will happen unto them; and this will consist in a perpetual banishment from the presence of the Lord the fountain of all happiness, and an everlasting doom of imprisonment with Satan and his Angels the King of terrors and source of all misery; with whom, there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth throughout all generations. This brings me, in the last place, to consider the necessity of imitating Job, in waiting for this change. And surely, but little is wanting to induce us to do a thing of such great weight and importance to us, where eternal happiness, or eternal misery depends on the event. If death summons us when prepared, and finds us watching in our calling, it will be our eternal glory and happiness; but if he overtakes us in the service of sin and Satan, then will our doom be that of never-ending

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pain and torment. Surely then, it is a matter of moment to us, that we live prepared to give an account of that life, which we are in daily expectation of giving up, and closing the account by which we must stand or fall to all eternity. The expression, you find, Job makes use of, is, "I will wait till my change come;" this implies a constant preparation, as those are who expect, or wait the coming of any one: as the servant of his master, to have all things ready for his reception.

We have something similar to this, in the parable of the virgins, who waited for the calling of the bridegroom. The wise ones procured their oil, and trimmed their lamps, and were prepared let him call when he would, and they slept. But the foolish, you see, thought they should have time enough to do it after they were called, before the bridegroom would go in; but the

the consequence was, they were excluded. And thus it is with many Christians; they imagine that death will give them time enough, by sickness, to prepare themselves by repentance for death; and therefore, they sleep securely in their sins, and are often, I am afraid, taken away in the midst of their iniquities. To conclude. I do not here mean that men should live in a perpetual gloominess, and dismalize every enjoyment in this world with the terrors of death; by no means; but let them imitate the wise virgins, who prepared their lamps; that is, let them take care to obey God's commandments, to keep their bodies and souls pure from all iniquity, and live so as to be able to give an account of their works, let them be called at any time; and then, like them, they may freely enjoy the good things of this life, with the same ease and composure of mind, as the virgins slept, till the Son of God shall call us to judgment.

ment. Let us but remember that heaven is a resting place; that is, the seat we are waiting for and expect; and therefore, we ought so to use, and look upon the things of this world, that we finally may obtain that everlasting state of bliss; through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory and worship, world without end. Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N XIII.

**VISITATION SERMON PREACHED
AT LEICESTER, 1784.**

I THESSALONIANS, iii. CHAP. 8 VERSE.

**FOR NOW WE LIVE, IF YE STAND FAST IN
THE LORD.**

ST. PAUL wrote this Epistle to the
Theſſalonians from Athens; he had
ſometime before preached the goſpel unto
them in perſon; but fearing that in his ab-
ſence (as was the caſe with the other places
he had been at) they might through the

tempter have swerved from this new covenant both in faith and practice; he, from an affectionate and fatherly concern for them sends, Timotheus (a fellow labourer in the gospel) to establish them, to comfort them in the true faith; to guard them against sinking under any tribulations which happened unto them; telling them, that this was the unavoidable consequence attending the first believers of the gospel; for “know you faith he, we are thereunto appointed;” when I was with you, I told you that we should suffer tribulation even as it came to pass, as ye know. St. Paul then tells them of the great joy he had in hearing by Timotheus, of their faith and charity, the grateful remembrance they had of him; their desire to see him even as he did them; therefore, faith he, we are comforted over you in all our afflictions and distresses by your faith; then follows the words of my text, “For now we live,
“ if

“if ye stand fast in the Lord.” The interpretation given to the first part of my text is two-fold. Some render it thus—by “now we live,” they mean to make the Apostle speak to this purpose; for by these means, by thus comforting and assisting each other, we shall live or survive every affliction; no tribulation, trouble, or anxiety, will be able to bear down upon and overcome us, if ye (for he doubts not of his own steadiness and fidelity) stand fast in the Lord; if ye turn not away from this new covenant of our Lord’s, as delivered to the world by his Son (Jesus Christ), and preached unto you by me with unfeigned love and sincerity.

THE other interpretation given to the former part of the verse, is by referring it to himself alone; as if he had said, “Now we live;” that is, “now I have heard from
“Timotheus of your steadiness and perse-

“ verance in the faith I delivered unto you ;
“ now I find my labour has not been in
“ vain amongst you : I am comforted in the
“ midst of all my afflictions. Had ye
“ deviated from the gospel I preached unto
“ you ; had my afflictions, had the hard-
“ ships I am now suffering, had they
“ affrighted you from your adherence to
“ the gospel of our common Lord and
“ Master, it would have been as death
“ unto me ; but since Timotheus hath
“ afforded me the glad tidings of your faith
“ and practice, I am comforted in every
“ affliction and distress by your faith.
“ Before I heard of you, I was afraid, lest
“ by any means ye had forsaken this only
“ hope of salvation ; but now am I re-
“ freshed again and alive, and shall count
“ every tribulation and suffering as nothing,
“ if so be ye stand fast in the Lord.”

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IN which ever light we consider the words of the Apostles, they convey to us great comfort and much improvement. If we consider them, as referring to the Apostle himself, they evidently teach us, how zealous and steady St. Paul was in his preaching and propagating the gospel of his Master Christ in the world. You may observe, not only here in my text, but in numberless other passages in his Epistles, that so far from being cast down by afflictions, troubles, or persecutions, that he even rejoiced in them, if so be he could but further the gospel of Christ. Had the Apostle obtained wealth, glory and power, by his new religion, then this expression in the text "now we live" (though it might have been equally sincere) yet would not have struck us with that conviction of his sincerity and earnestness in the gospel; because its present rewards, would have appeared a sufficient encouragement,

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and might even be thought (for the sake of its held out riches) able to gain over the hypocrite and wicked, in the same manner, as Simon Magus offered money for the gift of the Holy Ghost; hoping thereby to bring forth a tenfold return into his bosom. But on the other hand, when we consider the Apostle as leaving every thing that was dear to him here; and in exchange for riches, wealth, and grandeur, with the smiles of the great and powerful, to receive on the other hand, poverty, distress, and meanness, together with the ill-will and persecutions of almost the whole world; and yet to hear him say, in the midst of all these distresses and tribulations, that if his labour is not in vain; if he can but convince his hearers of the truth and value of the gospel dispensations; all his anxieties, troubles, and imprisonments were light, and no way affected him; for he was dead and insensible to every thing but Christ Jesus

fus and his gospel : if, saith he to the Thes-
salonians, ye will but stand fast in the Lord,
if ye will but believe, adhere to and prac-
tise the gospel I have preached unto you,
this is all my concern ; think not on my
troubles and afflictions, for I am alive, and
can never be overcome, subdued or weak-
ned in my steadiness and joy : so long as
I do but know, that I have not run or
preached in vain. If then, we view the
text in this light, (as referring particularly
to the Apostle himself) it opens to us the
character and the duty of a true minister of
the gospel. How indefatigable and sincere
a servant was St. Paul of Christ Jesus, you
find in this, and other places, where he
speaks of his office and profession ; that the
promulgation of the new covenant, the
drawing both Jew and Gentile to the glo-
rious light and privilege of the gospel, was
the high mark and end of his labours and
concern, in his Christian warfare. So that

he could but gain over his fellow creatures to the truth in Christ Jesus ; so that he could but make them sensible of their own good and interest, in embracing the faith and practice of the only saving religion ; it was the whole recompense and reward he wished for or expected for all his labour and hardships, in spreading these glorious tidings throughout the world. “ He be-
“ came all things unto all men, that by all
“ means he might save some.” By good report, or by evil report, by persuasion or by reproof, through pleasure or displeasure, through imprisonments, through stripes or persecutions ; he endured all things patiently, he tried all things boldly and without fear, to deliver both Jew and Gentile from the error of darkness and superstition, to the glorious light and power of the gospel ; which is alone capable of enlightening our minds with the true knowledge of God and his dispensations towards us.
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the only way of knowing how to worship and obey our Creator as we ought to do in this world, and of enjoying his eternal presence and happiness in the next.

It is through Christ alone, that we have life and immortality, revealed and confirmed unto us; “and there is no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

From this part then, we are led to consider the great duty of the pastors of Christ's Flock; and from St. Paul's example, to urge the great importance and necessity of a faithful unwearied conduct in the discharge of it.

BUT as this is a point not necessary at our present meeting, I shall proceed to consider the text in the other light; as affording

fording us from thence, many useful instructions for every rank and station in the Christian world. "Now we live, faith the Apostle, if ye stand fast in the Lord." St. Paul most probably, by his sending Timotheus to the Thessalonians, and expressing at the latter end of the second chapter, the very earnest desire of coming to them (but was hindered by Satan;) most probably had heard somewhat of their wavering in their faith, or being affrighted through tribulation; he here then, in my text, earnestly exhorts them to steadfastness and perseverance; assuring them, that the end of it will be life; that from the time a man embraces the Christian faith, he may reckon himself alive; that he hath imbibed the seed not of a frail transitory life, but a seed which will spring up to life eternal; if so be we will but stand fast in the Lord, that is, if we will but water and cherish this heavenly seed, with obedience

dience to the precepts of our Lord; if we will but stand, fixed and unwavering, in our practice to the rules of the Gospel.

A TRUE Christian can die no more; we shall ever live unto Christ, if we will but employ our study in fulfilling his commandments. This will disarm the sting of death. It is true, we must all pass to this eternal life, through the gate of death; yet if we stand fast in the Lord, the glorious prospect and confidence of our faith of meeting him in heaven, will encourage and fortify our souls at the hour of separation from the body. We shall, like St. Paul, earnestly desire to be with Christ; and by continually looking up to him, as the author and finisher of our faith and salvation, we shall learn to live superior to any trouble or vexation, that may chance to be our lot in this transitory world. Whether rich or poor, high or low, in prosperity or adversity;

versity ; whatever our talents are, whether of resignation in the lower and even distressing parts of life; or those of munificence and charity in the more high and elevated stations we shall live unto Christ; we shall direct ourselves after the rules and conditions of eternal life. We shall not lose the privileges and advantages of our Saviour's goodness, either by pride or arrogance, in saying, " Who is the Lord?" or by despair and murmurings, thinking there is no salvation for us in God! We are not, of this age, thanks be to God, subject to any of the troubles and persecutions to which St. Paul, and many of the first believers were liable; we peaceably and quietly are baptized into our new covenant; and without fear embrace our faith in this Gospel of life and salvation; we have no dread attending the discharge of our duty, nothing to affright or terrify us from standing fast in the Lord; if we then suffer

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fer ourselves again to be dead in sin after once being alive through Christ, by not standing fast in the Lord; how shall we escape; must not our condemnation be just and unavoidable? We have not any enemies to contend with, but from ourselves. Our own lusts and passions are all the fiery darts we have to quench and guard against. The sword which christianity, in the days of St. Paul, and the first ages of the new covenant, had to make its way against, is now happily sheathed, at least amongst us. If we live quietly, and mind our own business, we may enjoy and practise our faith in Christ Jesus unmolested, and without interruption and trouble. Surely then, if men will not, under all these blessings, stand fast in the Lord, and keep alive their faith, by fighting against their lusts and passions, and pursuing every good work, as recommended in the Gospel; they justly will die the *death*, and be doomed from that

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life

life and heaven, which they so ungratefully reject and despise, to the gloomy and miserable shades of satan and his angels. You may observe, that throughout this whole discourse, I have all along considered the expression *standing fast in the Lord*, to mean an obedience to the precepts of the Gospel; the same as if the text had been thus given——“ For now we live; that is, now
“ we have eternal life abiding in us, if
“ we will but keep ourselves steady and
“ unmoveable in the practice of those pre-
“ cepts, which Christ our Lord hath laid
“ down as the proof of our faith and con-
“ fidence in him: and as indeed, the only
“ means of obtaining eternal life, through
“ his mediation.” The shield of faith is not more necessary than the breast-plate of righteousness. What St. Paul more particularly means by standing fast in the Lord; you have it set forth in the chapter following my text; when the Apostle earnestly

earnestly exhorts them to godliness, to holiness, to love, to peace, and every good work. "As ye have, faith he, received
" of us how ye ought to walk and please
" God; I exhort and beseech you, brethren,
" by our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye would
" abound more and more." If you want
to know how St. Paul himself walked, you
have it at large in the the first and second
chapter of this epistle; the summary of
which is this: "Ye are (faith he) wit-
" nesses, and God also, how holily, and
" justly, and unblameably, we have be-
" haved ourselves among you that believe;
" as you know how we exhorted and com-
" forted, and charged every one of you
" (as a father doth his children) that ye
" would walk worthy of God, who call-
" ed you into his kingdom and glory."

THE whole then is this, that through
Christ we have the gift of eternal life;

and are called and invited to his kingdom and glory. Let us then, embrace the exhortation, comfort, and charge of the Apostle, in walking worthy of God; let us stand fast in the Lord, in subduing every lust, and quelling every temptation to sin; and living in all true holiness and purity of manners; thus shall we live after this life is ended, eternally unto God, in mansions of eternal and increasing bliss, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father, and Holy-Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, and worship, world without end. Amen.

S E R M O N X V I .

PROVERBS, chap. 24, verse 5.

A WISE MAN IS STRONG, YEA, A MAN
OF KNOWLEDGE INCREASETH STRENGTH.

THAT the affairs in this world are
ever in a changeable and fluctuating
state, men (even the most prosperous) must
admit of, and allow. It is not in the
power of the wisest to keep the balance
always even, or to form their schemes
with that exactness and foresight, as to bid

defiance to accident and fortune. The battle is not invariably to the strong, or the race to the swift; nor will the good man always meet the just reward of his piety and virtue, nor the evil man receive after his deservings. Though we sow wheat, sometimes the tares will grow predominant; and produce sorrow instead of a joyful harvest. And at other times (as David observes) "The wicked come in-
" to no misfortunes like other folk; nor
" are they plagued like other men;" their minds swell with the fatness or success of their plans, that they have not only substance for themselves, but for their children or posterity who shall succeed them upon earth. Since this is the uncertain and general state of human nature, it becomes every wise man to guard himself against it, that he may not be too much elevated in prosperity, or too much depressed in adversity; that whether riches or
poverty

poverty be his lot, he may be able to carry himself with moderation and calmness; or (which is the most trying) should a continual change of adverse and good fortune attend his pursuits, he may be able to fortify his mind against the one, and not be puffed up with intemperate arrogance and presumption in the other.

IN our natural state of innocence and virtue, unannoyed by vice and corruption, the life of man, like a pure and undisturbed stream, ran in its own natural course; and doubtless would have uniformly wafted us on with ease and security, into the haven of perfect and eternal happiness. The case is now become widely different. Our voyage through this world, is rendered tempestuous by the agitations of our passions, and violence of our impetuous and ungovernable appetites. When all seems calm and serene, and our ship (to carry on

the allusion) is gently gliding on over the smooth surface of the sea, the effects of our degeneracy too frequently raise up a storm of envy, lust, or ambition; which
“ lifteth up the waves on high, and
“ maketh us to reel to fro, like drunken
“ men, and driveth us to our wits end ;”
and oftentimes wreck and leave us on the naked shore of sorrow and despair. From hence we are convinced not to trust to the outward appearance of matters, nor in short, to ardently long after any thing in this world : which will teach us never to make use of indirect means to obtain or preserve it. It doubtless requires some strength of mind and soul to attain such a useful spirit as this : to bring ourselves to such a frame and uniformity of heart, as to be able to bear up ourselves in all the changes and chances of this fickle and transitory world. Solomon tells us, in the the text, it is to be done alone by wisdom and understanding.

ing. "A wise man, saith he, is strong;
 "yea, a man of knowledge increaseth
 "strength." By wisdom and understand-
 ing in Scripture, is implied virtue and re-
 ligious; and by foolishness and folly, is
 meant wickedness and impiety: because
 men can never shew themselves more wise
 and understanding, than by being religious;
 "The fear of the Lord, saith Job, that
 "is wisdom; and to depart from evil,
 "is understanding." And it is the
 "Fool who saith in his heart, there is no
 "God, and to depart from evil is an abo-
 "mination unto him." So that the text
 under this explanation runneth thus.

A RELIGIOUS and good man is able to
 bear up against the adversities of his de-
 generate nature; and a man of understand-
 ing (that is of real virtue) will add strength
 and power to his designs in life.

By

By strength here, we can by no means understand bodily strength; for wisdom hath nothing to do in this case. It is a strength which will supply the defects of bodily strength, and give power and weight, for the accomplishment of our designs, where the strength of the body fails; or add force and energy to it, whereby it becomes prosperous and effectual.

THE strength that Solomon tells us is the inheritance of the wise man, is that power which through religion he gains over his will and affections, that he is at no time subservient to them. He buildeth his house on the sure foundation of reason and virtue, that it never can be moved at any time, by the incursions and attacks of his outward and sensual passions.

This is a further proof, that by a wise man, is meant a religious man; for by religion alone are we able to conquer and to
 5 preserve

preserve our triumph over the world, and all its various temptations and assaults; men must not only have fixt principles of religion implanted in their hearts, but they must continually cherish and water them with constant reflections and intercourses with God and themselves. The enemy that soweth the tares does it privately; and steals away whilst we are asleep, and think all is secure: so that we are not aware of our hurt till the noisome weed of vice hath grown up and interwoven itself, not only into our hearts, but into our lives and conversations.

A wise man is strong: a man whose mind is trained up in the way of godliness is certainly strong against the enemies of his soul. But if he is not continually improving these commendable talents, they will by degrees rust, and be corrupted by the world; therefore Solomon adds,

“ Yea,

“Yea, a man of understanding increaseth strength.” Men can seldom go into the world, but they will have opportunities of adding strength and fortitude to their virtue, ; and see the necessity of retiring into themselves, and examining with the most exact circumspection and minuteness into the most secret recesses of their hearts, that they may keep themselves unspotted from the world.

IN this life, we are in continual war against an innumerable host of enemies, which way, lay both our eternal and temporal happiness, under many subtle and almost imperceptible coverings ; so that the very elect, the most cautious and wary, can with difficulty escape from their delusive snare.

We must not only put on the whole armour of God, but we must continually
bear

bear it; or we shall surely fall. We must, at no time, venture ourselves abroad without the girdle of truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, and resolution like men whose feet are prepared and hardened for the race, and the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith. We shall find sufficient need of them all, in order to quench and subdue the fiery darts of sin and satan, and our own unruly thoughts and suggestions; which are, in no wise, the least enemies to master and keep under, in subjection to our reason, and the gospel covenant.

But let not any of us, from this view of our earthly warfare, conclude that the paths of virtue and religion are difficult to find, and unpleasant and arduous to pass through. Solomon tells us the direct contrary; "that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Reason and religion are the proper and natural employ-
ment

ment for man; the pursuit of vice, not virtue, is acting foreign to our unprejudiced wills and inclinations. Virtue never sits uneasy on our minds, till our reason has been vitiated with the indulgence of sensual lusts. It is sin that turns the sweetness of religion into gall, and makes the great blessing of reflection become the bitter drops.

WE may observe the same of religion, as *Cicero* does of learning, that it is convenient and desirable at all times, and in every age and situation. The study and practice of our duty to God, and the relative offices towards our fellow creatures, must necessarily be pleasing to youth, and comfortable to old age; it will heighten our prosperity, alleviate our adversity; it must delight and amuse us when at home, and can be no incumbrance to us abroad; in short, as St. Paul observes, "it is profitable for all things." The heart void of evil, maketh
our

our day to shine clearer than the sun in the full meridian; and when the night cometh, it giveth the beloved sleep. Whilst the sinner, in the midst of light, walketh in darkness; and, like Job in his affliction, "when he lieth down, he is full of tossings to and fro, till the dawning of the day."

THERE is not any thing which renders the mind weaker, or more incapable to sustain the infirmities of our nature, or less active in our pursuits, than sin and wickedness. The reason is obvious and natural. An evil man, when oppressed with calamities, can have no comfort or resource; for in this state, it is God alone who can afford us relief: but from him, the wicked justly dreads punishment, instead of pity; and is sensible that his sufferings are only the effects of his own ways, and the consequences of his own devices. We cannot then wonder, that the wicked and foolish
man

man is most weak, when he has need of the greatest strength; and that the evil liver decreaseth his strength, as his trials come upon him. But the wise and religious man, as St. Paul observes of his own circumstances, finds himself strong in his human weakness; and a man who hath obtained perfect knowledge in the way of Godliness, increaseth strength, as his calamities grow upon him: so that he is able to bear himself up under any visitation that God may please to afflict his soul with; and when the dreadful change must come, (greater than the Poet's wife and good man, who would not tremble were the whole globe to break upon him,) the religious and good Christian, with even joy, resigns up his soul; and wishes to appear in the presence of his God, at the awful tribunal in heaven, before his Saviour, and all the holy angels.

THIS,

THIS, my brethren, is the true fortitude, this is the true strength, which the Royal Author of my text promises to the man of wisdom and knowledge. It is a strength that will enable us to fight against sin, and maintain our virtue uncorrupted and pure. It is a strength that will bless us with an equanimity of temper, in every state and complexion of life.

BUT you find the animating spring of this strength, and steadiness of soul, is wisdom and religion. “ He alone that walketh uprightly, walketh surely; but the way of wickedness is slippery, and tendeth to destruction.” Solomon indeed, begins his Book by inviting mankind to embrace wisdom and instruction; and tells us, at the same time, that “ the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” He guards us (particularly youth) from the snares and inticements of sin, and the ill effects of fol-

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lowing after evil counfels, and joining ourselves to wicked companions; which (he fays) are fo univerfally known to corrupt and inveigle us to become like them in all inordinate concupifcence, that he looks upon it as mad, and as abfurd, for youth not to avoid the company of the abandoned, as for a bird to fly into a net, which he knows is placed for his ruin.

BUT let us, laftly, ever bear in mind, concerning this wifdom, what our Saviour, on another occafion, brings to our remembrance; that wifdom will be juftified, if we will hate knowledge; or, which is the fame thing, if we will not chufe the fear of the Lord, we fhall in the day of calamity be made fenfible of our weaknefs, and when deftruction comes upon us like a whirlwind, then fhall we fee that there is no fafety but of the Lord; but what faith wifdom to fuch finners? “ you may call upon me, but I
“ will

“ will not answer : however easily or ear-
“ nestly you seek me, you shall not find
“ me ; but whoso hearkeneth unto me,
“ shall dwell safely and shall be quiet from
“ fear of evil.”

THUS we find, that wisdom, or righte-
ousness, or as we may say, the gospel co-
venant, is not designed as a mere matter of
convenience to the sinner ; an asylum that
he may run to, whenever he finds himself
sick, and overcharged with iniquity even
unto death ; and then, after restoration,
like the washed sow, to return to his former
vileness. Christ came into the world to
utterly destroy sin ; not merely to cure the
occasional effects of it, but to utterly eradi-
cate from our hearts every particle of the
leaven of the old man ; and to graft into
them the seeds of true religion, that through
his mediation, it may grow up into perfect
virtue, and render us meet partakers of
X 2 heaven ;

heaven; where sin dwelleth not, but perfection in every virtue, throughout all generations.

LET us then, not only profess ourselves Christians, but let us, by a constant reflection with our own hearts, preserve our faith lively, active, and improving. As Christianity can, doubtless, administer to us the greatest strength for every incident, in our earthly warfare; so the more we increase our knowledge in this perfect law of liberty, the more shall we encrease in strength; so that no temptations from without, or evil thoughts from within, will be able to obstruct our views of heaven. If riches, power, and honour, be our lot; our faith and confidence in Christ, will give us strength to make them the means of comfort, both to ourselves and others; and not of arrogance and luxury. And if labour, or even distress, is our talent; the same

Saviour

Saviour will vouchsafe unto us strength to bear up under all our calamities. To conclude the whole in one sentence: a firm trust and confidence in God, manifested by obeying his commandments, as set forth in the gospel, will bless us with strength and resolution for every scene in life; whatever our character may be, or however changing and disgustful: for doubtless that God who hath proposed to us heaven, will also, if we rely on, and obey him, give us strength so to pass through things temporal, that we may finally obtain the things which are eternal, and purchased for us in heaven through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, glory, and worship, world without end. Amen.

and confidence in God, manifested by
 obeying his commandments, we are found in
 the gospel, manifesting its truth, strength
 and redemption for every generation. But what
 every generation may be, or however
 changing and different, for doubtless that
 God who hath prophesied us, will
 also give us, and give them, give
 us strength to be partakers of the things
 promised, that we may finally obtain the things
 promised, and partakers for us in
 these things, Jesus Christ our Lord, to
 whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit,
 be ascribed all honour, glory, and
 dominion, and power, and blessing,

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S E R M O N XVII.

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

ST. LUKE, xvi. CHAP. 8 VERSE.

AND THE LORD COMMENDED THE UNJUST STEWARD, BECAUSE HE HAD DONE WISELY; FOR THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD ARE IN THEIR GENERATION WISER THAN THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT,

OUR blessed Lord, in the preceding Chapter, informs the Pharisees. (who seemed disgusted at his eating with sinners) by three similitudes, of God's readiness and

pleasure in receiving all mankind again into his service and protection: that their conversion is highly acceptable and pleasing to him, diffusing satisfaction and joy throughout the heavenly choir. That the Almighty is not only anxious for the welfare and happiness of his children in general, but that each of us in particular is the peculiar object of his fatherly care and affection: even the conversion of one sinner makes a solemn rejoicing in the heavens. "Like-
" wise I say unto you there is joy in the
" presence of the angels of God, over one
" sinner that repenteth."

CHRIST having thus established this comfortable truth of God's gracious invitation to repenting sinners, he now proceeds to inform them, by the parable before us, in what manner Christians must behave in their new service; that we ought not, after having once put our hands to the plough, to
look

look back or repent; but to continue steady and resolute to our principles; not to be weary or faint with well doing, but to remain stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, since we are now assured that our labour will not (through his merits) be in vain in the Lord.

THIS is the main end and design of the parable. It might, perhaps, be difficult to apply, every minute circumstance of it to our Christian warfare; which, indeed, has induced some to conclude the parable inexplicable, and not to be understood: but this is not required, nor observed by the most eminent fabulists of antiquity. If the general moral and instruction in view, is represented by, and deduced from it, it is sufficient, and the purpose abundantly answered; without torturing, either ourselves or the parable, for meanings or allusions which

which are neither wanting, nor to be expected from it.

THE words of my text contain the commendation and remark used by the rich man on the crafty and political conduct of his unfaithful servant. It may be necessary just to mention the principal parts of it, as from hence leading us to a more regular discourse on those particular points, which will naturally arise for our consideration and improvement. The sum of the parable is this: a steward being unfaithful and dishonest in his trust, was upon his Lord's knowledge of it, ordered to give in his account, for he was no longer steward.

THE steward we find, sufficiently conscious of his own iniquitous practices, did not contradict it; and consequently, could have no hopes of continuance, but goes away, and very prudently considers with himself

himself what he should do, after his discharge. He was too idle to work; too proud to beg; and from his great apprehensions in the third verse—"What shall I do?" he was most probably, through extravagance, very poor; for idleness and pride are no unusual companions to luxury; and if wealth is not of the party, they generally join themselves to knavery and deceit for their mutual sustenance and support. The determination therefore became easy and natural. "I am resolved, saith he, what to do." Since I cannot any longer defraud my master, by converting part of his just dues immediately to the service of my own indulgencies, I will abate them part of their bills, on condition that they shall receive me into their houses, when I am turned out of my stewardship. Accordingly he calls to him his Lord's debtors, and orders them conditionally to change the several sums due to their master

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ter into less; as some owing but half, and so on to the other, in various diminutions of the real sum which was due to his Lord; and thus by his artifice and cunning, he made to himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.

THE parable does not tell how his Lord got information of it; but few go down to the grave quietly, whose lives are dedicated to the service of satan. He gives them great hopes, and may tell them, no man seeth them; but in due time he appears in his proper colours; and then they feel the consequence of their evil doings. Sometimes the heart of the sinner overflows as it were with iniquity, and is its own betrayer. Sometimes their too great cunning discovers them; at others a too vehement defence of their own honesty lays them open to suspicion; and in most cases they proceed from sin to sin, till at last they grow

too

too flagrant any longer to lie hid. This we may readily imagine to be the case with the steward in the parable. He was doubtless too well hardened in his iniquity to express the least remorse. He truly, was a genuine son of satan, or as the gospel expresses it of this world, to still add a further aggravating circumstance to his former breach of trust; by defrauding his master in his just dues from his debtors, to incur their good-will and assistance. Some circumstances of this nature brought the second act of villainy to his master's ear; who called him unto him, and one should imagine to reprimand and chastise him; to convince him of the atrocity and heinousness of the offence. But what says the text? "The Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

BUT

BUT we can, in no wise, conclude that the Lord commended his steward for his iniquity and breach of trust. God forbid! He without doubt, held him in the greatest detestation and horror; but still, at the same time, could not forbear admiring the cunning and artifice of this wicked servant; what pains he took; what an artful contrivance he had now invented to enable him to enjoy his vicious courses, and still to partake of the mammon of unrighteousness. He shewed himself to be really a wicked man; and worked, from the heart, in the service of his master Satan. Some men love more wickedness than they dare to practice; but this man was steady to the course of sin; he seemed not terrified at the thoughts of appearing before his master, but acted up to his profession to the very last. And certainly, considered as a wicked man, he acted wisely. It is concluded that he was lost to all religion and every notion of

of God and his duty; that his whole plan was to live upon the wages of iniquity; and consequently his behaviour was consistent with his character. The action itself, was certainly very wicked, and by no means approved of by the master; for he would not applaud his servant for defrauding him of his right. But the great cunning and artifice of this wicked wretch could not but engage the admiration of his master; and made him to draw from it this general inference, that "the children of this world are in
" their generation wiser than the children of
" light." That is, that wicked men take more pains in their generation, to wit, in their evil pursuits, than the children of light; that is, than those who profess to call themselves Christians, do for the observance of the precepts of the gospel. There are some men whose lives make it their interest to have Christianity false; and consequently, ardently embrace the least shadow of an
objection

objection against the gospel. Such here alledge, that our Lord seems to encourage and commend fraudulent actions in this parable of the unjust steward; but a few words will soon shew the absurdity and falsehood of such a supposition. The parable, undoubtedly, was designed (as are the two others contained in the same chapter) to inform the Jews, and indeed all mankind to whom the gospel shall be preached, that men in general are too anxious after the things of this life, frail and perishable as they are; and bestow more pains and anxiety about them, than they do for those things which make for their eternal salvation: that the forecast and cunning which men shew in temporal affairs is really almost incredible. Neither heat nor cold, hunger nor thirst deter men from their worldly views; neither do disappointments affright them from a second trial. But this parable is intended not only against

worldly men, but those who endeavour to gain this life's goods by unlawful means; who work, as the Apostle observes, ungodliness with greediness; who, instead of entering into the service of their Lord, they enter into that of his enemy satan. And these, the parable observes, are much more attentive to their master's cause; and work more strenuously, and with greater ardour and sincerity, than Christians do in the service of their Saviour. We must not think that either the men or the actions, are here commended by our blessed Lord; but that their wisdom and contrivance are superior to that of Christians. He by no means, advises us to follow their steps; but to be as industrious after good, as they are after evil. It is not the action, but the circumstance which is intended for our application; a method very common in writings of this nature. Æsop gives us a remarkable instance in his fable of the Sa-

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tyr and Traveller; representing the odious and diabolical character of an insincere and double tongued man. Our Saviour, who knew no evil, and discountenanced all wickedness, not only in his word, but in his own holy life and conversation, we surely can never imagine that he could give the most distant approbation to our doing evil. Neither therefore, does he do it here. The steward indeed, acted very wisely, and cunningly as he thought, and to the best of his wicked judgment; but we read, it did not do. He was still discovered; it was brought to his master's ear. So far then, from encouraging vicious actions, you find, it is on the contrary, a great check to them. That, let the wicked man act with all the wisdom and forecast he is master of, yet you find some circumstances or other generally conspire to betray the villainy of his heart.

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THIS unfaithful servant thought he had sufficiently now guarded himself against every probability of being discovered; but yet some way or other his treachery was brought to light. And thus it is, in general, with all who labour in the vineyard of unrighteousness; that however cautious or circumspect they may be in their evil doings, their reign for the most part is but short. A few years, in general, bring them to account, and they are repaid for their iniquities; and it is very rare, if ever, that they escape the vengeance and justice of God, even in this present scene of things. From this explication of the parable, therefore, it is evident there is not the least room for any one to be encouraged to do evil, from the example of the unjust steward; who, with all his cunning, was betrayed; as will every sinner, most probably, in the life that now is, but undoubtedly in that which is to come.

BUT however, the moral or reflection which our blessed Lord draws from this parable is very just and true—that wicked men are, in their way, more wise and circumspect, than Christians are in their conduct. They shew more resolution, and put far greater confidence in the promises of satan, than we in those of God and our Saviour. You may observe, that the steward makes no complaints to his master satan, for suffering him to be discovered in his iniquity; he betrayed not the least trembling or foreboding of evil; but still continued boldly his plan, and steadily pursued the path which satan had pointed out for him. Surely in this respect he is worthy of our imitation in our behaviour before God. And I am afraid (as the text observes) that he shewed himself much more wise and discreet in his way, than we do in our way, who profess to call ourselves Christians. Misfortunes and disappointments

ments are too apt to cool the ardour of mankind in their devotions to God. We too soon cry out with the Psalmist, when a cloud breaks in upon us, that we have cleansed our hearts in vain. But you see the votaries of that evil one can bear disappointments. These sons of perdition can calmly suffer reproaches, ignominy and disgrace, besides the remorse of a guilty conscience, which will sometimes break in upon them; yet you behold them undaunted and undismayed, and suffering every rack, rather than desert their cause. And the most they hope for, is what they call the good things of this world. As to futurity, it must from principle be immediately stupified by luxury and sensuality, whenever such a thought offers to their mind. And shall these men take more pains, be more anxious to forsake God, and perish, than we are in our adherence to him? Is it possible that wicked
men

men shall use more diligence to gain an habitation with satan and his angels, than Christians (if they can be called so) do that they may inherit eternal life? It seems a thing almost beyond belief; but few there be that can challenge the truth of it.

But secondly, by the steward we are not only to understand the man of business and avarice, but the man also of pleasure and luxury; whose age is merely spent in vain shadows and empty phantoms; who may be truly said to spend both his labour, and wealth, for what will hurt both himself and his posterity. This is, as Solomon observes, "a fore evil under the sun." And yet, what industry, warmth, and eagerness do these children of folly and dissipation shew in their pursuits after these things; which must all soon vanish away like a dream, and

and leave in their room, the upbraidings of a guilty and tormenting conscience! And shall these men out-do Christians in vigilance and assiduity? Shall they be more attentive to the destruction both of their souls and bodies, than we are for their preservation and happiness? This certainly was the case of some in our Saviour's time; which he so severely censures in the parable before us; and meant it as a future lesson of instruction to every age of Christians, to rouse their attention and thoughts to the grand object of their salvation; and not to pursue it with laziness and indifference, as a thing scarce worth our trouble or concern. Even the pleasures (if they deserve that name) of sin, which are assuredly hereafter to be punished, are not given without trouble and anxiety. He that serves sin, is truly a servant to sin; and no man is a greater slave, than those who live under the tyranny of their lusts

and passions. For if they say go, they must go; and come, they come; do this, and they do it; and at last they deceive them, for their wages are death and destruction. But the way of righteousness is pure and easy; and the service of our Saviour perfect freedom. Not one injunction of our Lord's covenant requires that wisdom, forecast, and anxiety, that the steward used for the deception of his master. No great art is required to live as our own unbiaſſed nature inclines us to do. The trouble is none, in comparison to what the sinner has in the indulging his unnatural appetites; and, instead of after-remorse, the good Christian is full of satisfaction and joy. To conclude, men therefore, will ever find it more easy and satisfactory to serve and love God, which is our just and reasonable duty, rather than Satan, who will but continually entangle us in new stratagems and wiles: and at length

length betrays us, as he did the unjust steward, to our everlasting ruin and perdition. It requires less thought, and certainly no after regret, to keep ourselves holy just, and good; than to be in a continual hurry and confusion after evil and wicked pursuits: to make a good and proper use of the talents committed to our charge, neither through slothfulness nor fear to suffer them to lie useless and unemployed, nor like wicked servants, spend them in sensual or unjust pursuits. For, to make the parable applicable to us Christians—The Lord may be considered as our Creator, or as our Saviour; and each individual of us, as the steward to whom God has delivered, according to his own good pleasure—a talent of this world's portion, for our use and improvement; and has given us an understanding heart to distinguish between good and evil: and

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therefore

therefore we stand accountable before God, for our conduct and management. If we are rich, to make a proper use of them, without those vices which too frequently attend wealth; if we are poor, to sanctify our poverty with all patience and resignation to the will of God. To mention the whole, in one word; that we should all of us, in our different callings and stations, attend to the great importance of our vocation, in doing justice and loving mercy and walking humbly with our God; to keep ourselves as untainted as possible from the corruptions of the world, and to adorn our souls with every Christian virtue; and then thus shall we be accosted by our Lord, when we appear before him and deliver up our accounts—"Well done, thou good and faithful steward, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," through Jesus Christ thy Saviour. To whom, with the

28 SE60 Father,

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

Father, and Holy-Ghost, be ascribed all
honour, glory, and worship, world with-
out end. Amen.

THE END.

28 SE60